A PORTRAIT OF THE POETASTER AS A MAN

Metropollinaire

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PROLOGUE

i. I speak of now - the state I find I'm in
And try to justify my ways to all,
In doing so I'll speak of failed fusion,
Which leaves me partitioned, whilst you unite.

ii. I notice faults between myself and most
And so within myself where most know peace:
The latter kind may generate the first
But both are obstacles to normal life.

iii. I am not whole - I have no sense of self -
Partly because I have no membership
Of one or other group or social class:
I can't assert for certain who I am.

iv. I lose myself in situation's grasp -
Myself collapses separated from
Surroundings and their influence which cast
My shapeless form in shapes that pass as passed.

v. Now nearly two score years have passed since birth
And I were proud had I but nought to show:
Instead a trail of broken marriages
And debts to put a working man to shame.

vi. I've aged yet immature - thus boon of age
Has yet to come to me and though I see
Maturity in friends' and siblings' lives
I stay youthful, unsure and racked with fears.

vii. And my objective state is tattered rag
(Perhaps best swept away from others' view):
It's meaningless compared to social worth:
To me it's all I have to show from life.

viii. In recent past I've had no hearth or home -
In hospitals and hostels I have slept,
A scant reminder to domestic cheer:
I need see this as water past the weir.

ix. Now broken chances trailing dead behind:
And I dropped out without first tuning in;
And squandered chances trailing in my wake:
What few have had more opportunity?

x. I never saw beyond the document
And praised at school for learning fact on fact,
But to mature - present profession's face -
I took no guide and thus stagnated young.

xi. I have grown old and not enjoyed my youth
And miss the youth I never grasped or knew,
I watch the smiling, playing, revelling young
And bar myself for so much more than age.

xii. Those wasted gifts of mind that I passed up,
They flowered in youth and promised to bear fruit:
Neglected by their gardener they but rot
And advertise themselves in that they're not.

xiii. Now occupation might well do me good
Though my appraisal is that I'm unfit:
I lack the social skills which are required
To start to function in the world of work.

xiv. I made effort - professional attempt,
And chose a type of work which sends me mad:
I tried acquiring web programming skills
And thus I'm certified: more ways than one.

xv. When in my prime, the work was way too hard,
And in this area there's nothing worse
Than inability which shows itself
To all concerned through targets that are missed.

xvi. Since being poor oh how my skills have lapsed
(The science seems to change with season's turn)
I might as well attempt to light the night
As make and build a modern paying site.

xvii. Now first impressions, attitudes of mine
Provoke the type of thoughts which guide me wrong,
These flits of thought repeat despite my wish
To exorcise what strikes me prejudice.

xviii. And these impressions and the attitudes
Which rule my mind might well be taken from
1960's thought-safe TV sit-coms
Concerning well-to-do contented class.

xix. Thus my conclusions: mostly misconceived;
And there's a corresponding deficit
(Or tutored innocence) in treading path
That's mine and other's sexuality.

xx. And if I see, I see stereotypes -
And casting scenes in terms of castes long-gone,
Impressions form as false: my waking self
Rejects such thoughts, such thoughts I try to shelf.

xxi. Not now, but then in drink I sought a friend -
Thus chaos reigned for short of two decades -
The drink always the uppermost in mind
Despite the many other calls in life.

xxii. Like all in times of stress I reach for drink
But this relaxer causes more distress
And aggravates the starting drive or need -
Whichever first, a dependence follows.

xxiii. The mood when drunk becomes normality -
The mood when sober seems one lacking joy -
And all life's pleasures will retreat, replaced
And substituted by a drunk's desire.

xxiv. The problem is the personality
Which drinks - remove the drink - remains a drunk:
Through four years, most without, I struggle still -
This part of life must change and that I will.

xxv. London's my firm location now as I've
Stopped dreaming that a change could bring a change:
If malady - then centres in my head
And that is fixed despite geography.

xxvi. This place - a force and forces way of life
To souls not born and raised to her curt ways:
Alien to her proud entrenched elites
I but exist, persist and fail to thrive.

xxvii. This capital's a young and stubborn wife -
Defy her will and she insists more strong,
But play uxorious and she repays
All promised then when promises were made.

xxviii. And she has been a friend to me at times
Of need when other friends have turned away
And taught me how to cope with pain's duress,
Subsisting side by side with loneliness.

xxix. Politenesses and kindnesses now flow
And pour from even harsh men when desired:
Simple ability or aptitude
Which I do not possess in slight small sense.

xxx. With this I lack a social property
That has no name, a one that's poor defined,
And in respect of this I'm *asocial*
And this restricts the ways I interact.

xxxi. An implication, look or word or smile -
I try yet my communication fails:
A language spoken fluently by all,
And I don't grasp the basic rudiments.

xxxii. So this difficulty is plain to all,
For others interacting and for me:
I might know beneficial synthesis
If able to uncover genesis.

xxxiii. And now I wish I'd find I understand
The etiquette and interplay of friends:
The jostling roles producing give and take:
The show that's common frame of reference.

xxxiv. Too many candidates will takes dislike;
My conversation seems to be inept,
And limited to but some paltry themes:
My learnt humour - youthful - antisocial.

xxxv. Subtle the art - to sacrifice and mix -
Forward oneself in raising joined commune:
I fail in humbling self to group desires,
Assert a me when I should acquiesce.

xxxvi. For years I've yearned to find companionship
And failing, realise the fault is mine:
An *isolate*, I crave some company,
And long to be within society.

xxxvii. And now to love - a word I wasn't taught -
I've lost and found, mistook and thought I'd found
But never understood the calls of love -
My heart on sleeve for all to view but me.

xxxviii. Fanaticized by love which drives me mad
I burn and bathe in all consuming flame
With scant regard for just regard, I love
And idolise my objects of desire.

xxxix. I said it drives me mad and this is true -
No love for me, but with insanity:
As stands, not yet the case I fear to love
But weight of evidence would tell me to.

xl. Regardless, I desire a woman's kiss,
And yearn for heart and heart's requited love
And too the smile and eye of promises:
All said I'd be content with fondnesses.

xli. My family, now, as always, are strange
And my parents divorced when I was young
And they forbade the words "mother", "father",
And they also omitted word that's "love".

xlii. And so, my family's atypical -
And with parents both wed again I've four
In all, assumed or real, mothers, fathers:
Professionals the lot for what it's worth.

xliii. Each of the four have faults they're blind to see -
They're proud or angry, cold or they disown;
One of these faults is that they'll show bias:
Good to their favourites - how they treated me!

xliv. Past thoughts have occupied the far extremes
Of well known nature nurture paradigm:
When you are damned by both in equal share
It matters not, which weighs in foul or fair.

xlv. Fifteen years now I've been one diagnosed -
My mind collapses being leant upon -
I, coshed and soothed by medication's fist,
Attempt the shades of stress which others breeze.

xlvi. And in those years I've scarce known even health;
Once in a while I'll lose the plot - delude:
Most times disabled trying hard to live:
Was rare to say that I was sound and well.

xlvii. When I am ill it's like a natural drug
Has been administered to make me well -
The feeling is illusory: those close
Witness descent into insanity.

xlviii. I used to think my illness was the cause
Of woes - but now for other reasons too
I see the cipher to society
Laid out for each and all to use but me.

BOOK I - INCOMPLETENESS OF SELF

i. I will attempt comparing you with me
Although in this I feel unable to
As there's no common frame of reference
And this a feeling I should emphasise.

ii. Plainly said, I am me and you are you,
Sometimes united by an "us" or "we" -
But these few words disguise a complex world,
The communality of human kind.

iii. I'm mystified as to relationships
Of self and other, straight perceiving strife
And differences in place of that concord
Which leads to mutual aid and harmony.

iv. Most differentiate or distinguish
Themselves from others, but for me there seems
To be no overlap - no area
Permitting me to make comparison.

v. Failure to apprehend the other's mind
Is not a failing of degree or kind
But is an absolute - and I cannot -
Whilst others all possess, are able - can.

vi. From what I comprehend of you and I
One is a tune, the other's my deaf ear -
An introduction into you and me
I think would show our species not the same.

vii. You have a will - if confronted or met
By opposition, you will overcome,
And so present yourself as obstacle
Or modulating force to other's wills.

viii. You have a personality - by which
I mean you have a set of ways or rules
(Or stated otherwise a fixed psyche)
Which regulates behaviour - rain or shine.

ix. You have a continuity - if changed
The circumstance then something stays the same -
Not just your personality - also
Foundations basic to all human kind.

x. My will is weak - so much it may not be:
My personality is poor in growth
And continuity erodes with mood;
I lack all three - I ask if I am man.

xi. So failing these divides me into parts
(Some ones disjointed and disjunctive each) -
The situation brings forth this or that
In me - patchwork of clashing scraps of rag.

xii. This is the outset - absent lines in sand
Have need of demarcation: you and I,
Difference outweighs the similarities -
Almost as if comparing chalk and cheese.

xiii. As seen I can't know others as they are
And thus I dive into solipsisms,
And with such views (when all is said and done)
I am consoled in that I am alone.

xiv. I postulate that all is but figment
Of my own mind - a sheen which may control
My self and is beyond my power to change
But still my mind's figment, and that gives strength.

xv. Such stance may sound to be both fanciful
And grandiose - to state that I am all -
Though will of comprehension is required
To see that it is neither whim nor boast.

xvi. The self does not control though it is all:
The speeding bullet that may pierce my skull
Is imagined by me which does not mean
I can prevent my one impending death.

xvii. These views, simply a shift in emphasis
From we to I, from us to me, with I
Becoming we - this shift should fit the style
And paradigm of this millennium.

xviii. It makes no odds if object seems to be
Figment or otherwise reality:
It makes no odds if person is or was
An actuality or mind's product.

xix. Regardless, universal laws apply
Physical and of our society,
As these are laws, products which come from self,
Every and each are manifolds of mind.

xx. From youth I've craved to be the cynosure
And by adopting this philosophy
I am of self, plainly though, not of all,
And thus I seem to reach half way at least.

xxi. And with this stance my views of other's lives
Are simplified - their innards don't exist:
And if they do they're just created by
Imagination's over-active play.

xxii. Admittedly my trite solipsism
Is not a tree of life that I've researched -
Home-grown, I like to think of it as earth
That might harbour some growth if tended right.

xxiii. Philosophy is not a master plan
Or blueprint by which I would will an act
Or formulate my coming deeds - it comes
And goes as cognitive, mostly obscured.

xxiv. I've seen these views laid out in black and white
In public patient information sheet:
They spoke of them relating to disease -
If held as true the person can be seized.

xxv. Such thoughts logically progress and form
Theoretical idiosyncrasy
Which questions how language assumes a role,
And raises worth of putting things to verse.

xxvi. A wealth of personal experience
And lack of common frame for thought exchange;
That which I feel, cannot be spoke or said
As language is a tool too blunt for use.

xxvii. My words just seem to scratch the surface thought
And don't convey the meaning that is meant,
There lies a world of aching tragedy
Below my words and their futility.

xxviii. Intending to engender empathy
I raise a laugh or worse I raise concern -
My audience decipher spoken words
And disregard the feelings as first meant.

xxix. I saw and loved a piece of modern art
When I was young which seemed to resonate,
The artist (I forget) explained himself
(At least in art my stance is not alone).

xxx. This was a mechanised life sized sculpture:
A mannequin on bicycle in suit,
Rear mount the speaker of a gramophone,
Once in a while man peddled on his bike.

xxxi. And when he peddled in attempt to move
A disjunctive cacophony of sound
(So bumps and clunks) emerged from speaker-horn -
Provoking title for this work: "Language".

xxxii. And so I find I speak and I'm misheard,
Misunderstood, sometimes for best, ignored;
It seems to me, language is God's poor joke:
Endeavour is ordained to fail in spades.

xxxiii. People whisper and talk and shout and scream,
Deliver blunt or fine soliloquies
To an audience that's deaf, mute, or both
And talk on talk is talked for its own sake.

xxxiv. This chat's as cheap to be superfluous -
If I'm to gain enjoyment watching soaps
(In resonance with my views on language)
I find them better when the sound's turned off.

xxxv. And through my seeming incomprehension
I'm drawn to metred verse, sometimes in rhyme -
I feel somehow constricted not constrained
As if a splint supported broken bone.

xxxvi. And I re-read, re-write, re-work my verse
And show to others in the finished form:
I gain precision through the measured word,
I'm comprehended, who knows, even heard.

xxxvii. But these solipsistic views, linguistic
Attempts at thought, all fail - the crux is me -
The solipsist requires a functioning self
And I'm dysfunctional before all else.

xxxviii. The dictionary defines the word as thus:
'View that the self is sole existent thing' -
What if the self is not at ease - the world
Is fraught with all the failings from the self.

xxxix. Adopting such a rare philosophy,
To emphasise the self when self is damned,
Mistakes the place to lay foundation's stone,
And raises framework on unstable ground.

xl. At times I feel profound self-doubt, unease,
At times like this I wade in self-neglect,
At times like this my self abandons faith,
The self is source of all - how can this be?

xli. On other days I'm well, such thoughts give strength
I see a universe in harmony
With my system - all actions resonate
Arranged in comprehended categories.

xlii. Such days are few and most the time my doubts
The upper hand - this, my philosophy,
Has failed - it touts systematic whole,
Although results are basic fatal flaws.

xliii. I think such views bear fruit if he who holds
Them courts success and all her hangers on -
If most with self and life goes well, such views
Become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

xliv. With me a rotting useless branch sets forth
The wonder and prowess that is a tree -
The germ and cause of this or that disease
Lays claims as its the body it attacks.

xlv. I liken owning such views to money -
If you have enough, all is good and grand:
But if you're short, the construct makes for hell
And you but wish for more of that which fails.

xlvi. I place myself upon a plinth of stone
And fail to give myself the shard of worth
That others emanate and so would grace,
Though others baulk at placement on a plinth.

xlvii. These views hold me at times in state of trance
I see the world through tinted spectacles
As one accustomed to substance or drug -
The stance becomes habitual anodyne.

xlviii. Perhaps solipsism causes problems
Above and over those I hold and know -
It seems a whim requiring sweat and grit,
Perhaps wisest, I should abandon it.

xlix. I feel a fragmentation and a lack
Of self which continues on, regardless
Of what philosophy and attitudes
To self and life - some canker takes a hold.

l. I'll treat of fragmentation and of lack
Separate, although the two conjoin and merge -
Thus pain and want produced by some disease
Are to the man who suffers, both as one.

li. My will is weak - so much it may not be:
My personality is poor in growth
And continuity erodes with mood;
I lack, I lack, I'll say a second time.

lii. In so many respects to have a will
Is but a synonym for getting your
Own way - in general things don't go my way -
And will frustrate equates to failing mood.

liii. And then I acquiesce when first opposed -
Foundations so unstable that I shrink
To put my view across and can't assert
Myself as sure when differences arise.

liv. Sometimes I'll curse and rail against my lot,
All seems unfair designed to drive me mad,
But such outbursts of anger never gel
To plan of action or an act of will.

lv. My personality is like a mist -
It clouds and obfuscates, residing in
Half truths, presenting but obscurities
And cant theories unknown to me and most.

lvi. In groups I don't define my point of view
And if I do my stance is ludicrous -
I crave extremes and it's no matter which
I occupy on spectrum - left or right.

lvii. And consonant with this I say things to
Provoke, with lust for bitter argument,
And fail to apprehend the basic fact
That to offend is not a proof of self.

lviii. With shifts in mood so shifts in views of life -
In mood that's critical towards myself
How harsh I'll criticise my company
(Ignoring bible's tale of speck in eye).

lix. And then at other times I'll bear insult
To maintain basest rags of company -
Desire is such I'll acquiesce to Paul
And then to Peter, though they disagree.

lx. And thus (with lack) I contradict myself -
Consistency or continuity:
Both seem to be beyond my ailing grasp -
Hypocrisy devours with its firm clasp.

lxi. And that is lack, now fragmentation too,
Although the two are one - any fragment
Was part of whole at time - the absent whole
Likely exists in fragments, when it's dashed.

lxii. It seems within myself (if me exists)
Persist and thrive a numbered different me's
Each one the same and, equal, not the same,
And each has drawbacks and advantages.

lxiii. Most strikingly, each comes and goes with mood
And fragments show or pass or hide themselves
Depending on myself - depending on
My cloud or hail or shine internalised.

lxiv. If just a mood or feeling - it runs strong
And subjective sometimes will overlap
With objective - with others pointing out
To me, that which I feel is known and sure.

lxv. If they comment as such, it tends to be
Pejorative (an intervention would
Likely be suggested) - occasionally
They will comment or dwell on positives.

lxvi. Each self is like a bubble filling mould
In parts, but never occupying cast -
It seems to be that there's a child-like me
Inside myself with gaps between the two.

lxvii. I'm me and I'm this failing cast of me -
I could and should relate and interact
But there's this space - there's what I should project
And what's inside - this pad of nought restricts.

lxviii. Some days this void perimeter is small -
I'm confident - at other times replaced
By other self the gap of space is large -
And I am left devoid of certainty.

lxix. And if this self (or lack of self) were one,
Possessing temporal continuity,
There'd be a scope for some development,
Problems and failings could be worked upon.

lxx. As each replaces each from day to day,
Sometimes from hour to hour, I have no hold -
The task's as answering some complex query,
With question changed as you begin to speak.

lxxi. These selves may be facets of just one self -
If or not it's usual to feel such things
I'm not aware - and this I will repeat -
I lack a common frame of reference.

lxxii. Each one is different, so too similar,
Each one is me - not out of character -
Subjective things - perhaps they're just my mood,
Which swings so strong sometimes as to delude.

lxxiii. And with this, situation plays a role,
A role which could be seen as causative
As it so rears a head and plays a part
Greater than that of some attendant lord.

lxxiv. And so when I'm at home, I'm me at home,
And walking, ambling down the street I wear
A differing hat, but me varies the most
In diverse company with change on change.

lxxv. Placed in society of some I'll thrive,
Flourish and bask as in my element,
Have confidence, have things to say, have wit
(At times) appearing thus a normal mind.

lxxvi. Placed in society of other type
I'll put my foot into my mouth unkind
To me not others, that or cause offence
Attempting to discuss a point or two.

lxxvii. I am at ease with some, their influence
Extends or reaches out and cradles me,
They play the part of catalyst in fond
Reaction making me the best of me.

lxxviii. But others catalyse the opposite
A sour reaction bringing forth the faults -
The worst in me - with it self-consciousness
Which undermines the good, provoking bad.

lxxix. In truth I seem to be an instrument
That's played upon by others as they wish -
A given person may extract the good
Or bad dependent on their will or mood.

lxxx. Above, effects of people stand discussed,
Though I'm affected much the same by place -
To overcome surroundings is the dream
Of most, though my surroundings worse than some.

lxxxi. I feel a joy akin to ecstasy
The day I walk the park in bright sunshine:
I feel a low and ideate on voids
To sit and watch the rain from hostel room.

lxxxii. And these extremes I find hard to console
With thoughts of just one self, of just one me -
These two extremes can't be the one, the same,
Doubly so when both happen in one day.

lxxxiii. Difference of place - difference of company
(Word situation covers both of these)
And I'll display a part of me distinct
From what you'll see at other times or place.

lxxxiv. The faces thus exhibited as I,
Don't form united personality -
Facets are fragments, chaotic blurred stripe,
Rather than example, of person's type.

lxxxv. And this piecemeal fragmented lack of self
Is worsened by a lack of binding class -
Whilst others draw succour from social group
I isolate and draw on my own faults.

lxxxvi. Take one fragmented cook - he's still a cook -
But take fragmented me - there never was
A being - pieces clash - as earthenware
And Portland Vase assembled to a whole.

lxxxvii. To illustrate: I'm neither unemployed
Nor satisfied postgraduate student -
I fall between the two with fraught research -
Denied the joys of each I join no group.

lxxxviii. In life each type is recognised as type,
Is recognised by same as similar,
By others seen as part of greater group,
But me, I'm seen as weird or strange or odd.

lxxxix. And this ability to play a type
Is weak in me - and it's connected with
The artistry of taking roles, although
The role is one of self and not assumed.

xc. Without a role I fall upon my wits
Which need improved - perhaps an overhaul -
Some days my banter keeps me well afloat,
But most the time I ooze awkward silence.

xci. And much of this results because I lack
Profession, trade or craft: I lack a class -
And so I am some crushed empty beer can:
Useless reminder to indulgences.

xcii. If to define myself - my quintessence -
I'd need focus on failure and on lack:
No wonder that, when I project myself,
It's not in role of social acolyte.

xciii. I think to count myself as déclassé
I must have fallen out from being in,
Have lost a class, have lost a partnership,
The trappings and the rule of social group.

xciv. When young, if I belonged to, had a class
The bond was but allowances of youth -
In that respect I never knew a join
Nor membership, nor union with a kind.

xcv. I want to find the word for one without
And one whose never had - it's not 'outcast'
As where's the casting out - a 'down-and-out'
Is material and my needs are met.

xcvi. Extremities are often furnished well
By our language, but where's our wanted word:
'Social misfit' - if I am, let us say -
But better lets invent one - *aclassé* .

xcvii. I've said at times that I compare myself
To bubble filling mould in part, although
At times the bubble outgrows self's own mould,
Exposed to outside world is prone to burst.

xcviii. This happens when becoming confident,
A notch above my usual downcast me,
And thinking thoughts of elevated self
I enter worlds both ludicrous and false.

xcix. I think myself as one who's competent
Above and over my abilities
And try to play the part of dilettante
When role of ignorance would better suit.

c. I (with this whim that I describe) collapse
It sets me back below the former state:
No modesty - I grow - and then retract
To nervous ways reproaching self and mould.

ci. I guess that others are and feel themselves
And having this (or just knowledge of it)
Prevents the oscillations that I know
And stabilises like the guys I lack.

cii. With no stability my thoughts of self
Approach the fraudulent - I see me great
And good - I see myself as popular -
I see myself a cut above the rest.

ciii. Somehow my mind tempts me to play the game
An elevated mood encourages -
And sure as sure is sure the role's assumed
I start to think I'm born remaining free.

civ. I guess, all told, this pattern's known to most -
Although I mark a difference in degree -
The scale on which I rise and fall is grand -
With others scope's restrained through constant self.

cv. Sometimes I'm grandiose and in that state
I ideate how great my wit and charm:
This certainly the pride before the fall -
Fall measured out in span of days and nights.

cvi. I feel the two extremes of pride and shame
Beginning to appreciate that one
Begets the opposite - they seems a flux
Of moods from realms beyond conscious mandate.

cvii. Although I start to know stability
(Or more of it than I have known before):
I think it's key that moods no longer are
As elevated as they've sometimes been.

cviii. I blush to think how grand I've felt at times
In harmony, at one with one and all -
But then I realise that it's a sign
Or symptom caused by this disease of mine.

cix. And this fragmented self reveals itself
To others whose response then seems to be
Dislike - no great surprise that for my faults
I'm treated differently and stigmatised.

cx. Pronouncing unclearly, I hesitate,
My hearing poor, I feel I fail to grasp
That which is said, and when I do I miss
The thrust of sense: conversing makes for work.

cxi. And others note these inabilities
And think me source of fun that's to be had
Or worse, an object of contempt to scorn,
Or both (receiving patronising mirth).

cxii. Misunderstood (in terms of speech), and too,
So often failing to express my thoughts
Coherently, I blush, I look bemused,
And find it hard to interact with ease.

cxiii. And others seem to take these signs as signs
Of some deficient status (zero plus) -
The interplay would indicate to them
To make little, so, to make light of me.

cxiv. Sometimes reaction so habitual
I think to check reflection in a glass
Expecting something physical (a mark)
Upon my face that makes my treatment strange.

cxv. This noted, there's an ethos where I live
(As there's an ethos almost everywhere)
Of proud community and memory
(I've lived in same locale one year and half).

cxvi. Last year I had avoided hospital
Although my mind was in poor health some months,
And though I caused no harm to anyone
I made a nuisance of myself at times.

cxvii. Now I've gone seven months in better health
But still because this came to pass I sense
I'm known - of course I sense I'm known for old
And now misguided grounds of infamy.

cxviii. And if this were the case, then it would straight
Explain the stigma that I feel I feel -
But either way, at times, responses that
I get: beyond the curt, beyond the brusque.

cxix. Perhaps they think that I'm washed-up, a tramp,
Or they dislike my face, perhaps I smell,
I do not talk the same, seen arrogant:
A million grounds with one certain result.

cxx. Whatever's causing it, I can't escape
That cordial exchange of greetings makes
My day - I can't believe that others so
Congratulate themselves on crawling slow.

cxxi. This sword wielded against me's double edged
And cuts both ways - there is a stigma keen,
And then for faults which move some others to
Inflict this pain, I lacerate myself.

cxxii. And I could understand that I'm at fault,
But fate, requiring social punishment,
Goes on to taunt with biting self-reproach;
So others stigmatise, and self condemns.

cxxiii. I guess the problem's my mentality
But how do I augment a change in mind
But with the mind which is the damaged part?
With mind correct the mind which pains itself?

cxxiv. The self-tortures arise in everyday
Vignettes - at times I dread to enter shops
For fear that I'm disliked, or if I'm not,
That they somehow will take dislike to me.

cxxv. I said the problem's my mentality
Which is inferiority (or near)
Associated with the hollow boast
To claim and feign those things I don't possess.

cxxvi. And so I feel a gratitude when served
In shops and more when with some courtesy
But side by side with this I feel above
Those keeping shops (my hollow boast that's feigned).

cxxvii. Regardless if I feel above or no
I still will sternly castigate myself
If in a shop I say or do something
Which jilts exchange of words or pleasantries.

cxxviii. I blame myself if man who serves is curt
(And though inferiority to now
May be extreme but within normal range)
This is a failing seeing faults in me.

cxxix. And so I've given an example here
And what applies, applies elsewhere also,
I tend to blame myself in company
And see in self the reasons that things fail.

cxxx. The poles that are inferiority
And stigma have a grounding in the real
And in imagination too - and it's
A task, to distinguish the real from thought.

cxxxi. And if the thing's a product of my mind
It is a self-fulfilling negative,
And if it's not I have been stigmatised
And through my ills I'm treated differently.

cxxxii. As each one situation comes to pass
I see self-torture's tails and stigma's heads -
I yearn the day when both sides evanesce,
When both sides fall and fade to nothingness.

cxxxiii. And with all this I lack a sense of self -
Not just a lack of self, a lack of sense
Of self - I question if I know what's me -
I question who or if indeed I am.

cxxxiv. Sometimes when stepping out into the street
I double-take and pause and ask myself
'What feels odd?' and the reason's my psyche -
Stunned by a normal change of circumstance.

cxxxv. Through presentation with the open air,
Or through spatial juxtapositions, I
Am brought to question my existing self -
I am surprised and wonder who I am.

cxxxvi. As you can see from this, fragility
Is something mine - if I am overwhelmed
With change of scene imagine what the task
When I at times present in company.

cxxxvii. Sometimes with others I retreat into
A shell of stupefaction, blank my looks
And utter nothing with my mind almost
Shell-shocked from conversation's interplay.

cxxxviii. I feel as one who can't project himself -
Inside I seem a void internalised -
The resonating cord is lax or snapped -
My thoughts supine or prone, they sink to silt.

cxxxix. To say that in this state I have become
Essence of nothingness compares to death -
To make comparison would flatter me
As there remains in me an inner self.

cxl. This inner self but waiting, hoping for
Some word in surround's alien exchange
To be directed sole and straight to me -
Much like the spoilt infant expecting sweets.

cxli. And alongside this self which lacks a sense,
As partner, I'm a stranger to myself -
Although I feel as if the two were one:
The self is not, and therefore can't be known.

cxlii. I don't know me, unable to predict
Those situations which give rise to stress,
And then if stressed I don't know how I should
Placate myself - though able others can.

cxliii. I know myself poorly and so little
That I'm unable to control my moods -
Some days my moods are good - I thank my luck,
Some days my moods are bad - I persevere.

cxliv. Now you can start to see the ways I view
And understand myself: this self-portrait,
Perhaps it shows technique, though lacking grace:
I hope that painting, sitting, lights my face.

BOOK II – OBJECTIVE STATE AND HOPE

i. I have married three times above my state
(And cohabited as marriage requires);
If they were *wives* of *Windsor* they were not
Made *merry* having chosen me to wed.

ii. The failing mine in each - my illness was
My fault, exacerbated by a mind
Persisting with the thoughts of malady
Beyond recovery - well yet unwell.

iii. The wives that took the marriage vow were each
Aware of my acute and chronic faults
Although reality perhaps surprised
Their poor foresight, then ill-equipped for ills.

iv. Not learning, it's as if I retrogressed
In passing each to each, and starting out
A poor husband I graduated worse,
And finally became degenerate.

v. I cringe to think I never thought such thoughts
As how can I engender love from her
But dwelt, as youth tends to, (but not possessed
Of youth's excuse) fixated on myself.

vi. It's only with a fool's naivety
That my wedlocks could seem as happy joins -
I never took the care or time to know
The other's inner state (which likely pained).

vii. And during most my wedded years I drank,
But ignorant of cost to heart and mind
And soul of me and others close at hand,
I tied myself intoxication's noose.

viii. The sharing failed - unequal domestic
Division of labour tacitly arranged;
I took good will for granted (and effort)
Which must have made for simpler life less me.

ix. I speak of failings but in light of day
What most upset was my insanity
And those corollaries to loss of mind
That can't be born by best at best of times.

x. I've said that I can't get inside the mind
Of most - imagine what disaster comes
To pass if failing such as this applies
To her who shares your bed, cohabitee.

xi. As you and I are opposites, so were
My wives and me - the match a recipe
For separation on whatever grounds -
Each was a marriage bound through me to fail.

xii. Were I, as I am now, present thus twice
At my own conjugal exchange of vows
I would object, and down on bended knee
Would plead for saving all from selves and me.

xiii. And I've set sail in search of prosody
And this is not some stroke of genius,
This must be rightly seen insanity,
A vain, futile attempt of failing mind.

xiv. I haven't only chosen authorship
But further, form of verse which no one reads,
Today attention's on the internet,
The fingertips, not rambling trains of thought.

xv. With vision *Shelley* delineated
A synthesis and mind's analysis,
And saw the first as reason's bold domain,
The latter as imagination's scope.

xvi. And poetry for him "*the expression
of the imagination*", here he worked;
And here he laid a claim for influence
Extending into every part of life.

xvii. This overarching claim to influence
Seems short on truth and idealistic:
Thus, if indeed sweet poetry ruled lives
This metrical mandate has shrunk with time.

xviii. To read *Defence of Poetry* is like
Dissecting one remaining behemoth,
The race is gone and yet their might and strength
Have left a corpse, reminder to the past.

xix. So I've set sailing in the wake of gods,
Poets who formed a generation's taste,
Who moulded morals as they thought was best,
And what is more, delighted on the way.

xx. My bark is not to reach the foreign shore;
Had it the worth, the winds don't blow today
That filled the sails of craft of yesteryear:
Though Shelley may defend, our age has sacked.

xxi. My place, a dwarf in awe of dead giants
Who fretted, strut their hour upon the stage
With such aplomb to resonate through time:
A fool I ape, not imitate, the great.

xxii. And mad and mad on verse, I rate my chance
Above my chance in other centuries -
Instead of care in weal I have freedom
Along with supervision of my state.

xxiii. The institutions tend towards acute
And medication's better year by year -
To try to live in your community
Can be at times an honour and a joy.

xxiv. And thus I move towards my plan of work,
Each day I try to write as best I can,
Maybe researching others' prosody,
And thanking gifts of health and sanity.

xxv. My status waxes unemployed, so too
Dissatisfied postgraduate student -
I live and breathe both worlds and neither one
Softens the edge of other's frank strictures.

xxvi. And being unemployed is like to be
A seedless grape - majority if asked
Would take their life without the work, also
Their grapes without the irritating seed.

xxvii. Few see the tragedy of fruit without
A seed - a reproductive organ that
Can't reproduce - here is a tool not fit
For purpose, robbed, devoid of function's plan.

xxviii. And fewer still, pragmatically inquire,
Just how you grow a plant that has no seeds -
Hormones are sure to have a part to play,
To have a role in sterilising grapes.

xxix. This unemployment gradually prevails
And like that fundamental fault, the kind
That undermines, this fault's damage requires
Whole's overhaul - there is one word: *structural*.

xxx. And existentially I've made the choice:
Domesticated animal or tame -
The herdsman's hound's domesticated beast,
The sheep are tame, as me in idleness.

xxxi. The dog that guides me is my circumstance
Which barks if I should dare go spending cash
Or answer social questions on myself -
Apart I'm free to roam across the field.

xxxii. And in this way where I but bide my time
I graze the grass and bleat and have my hair
Trimmed once a year and serve my master's aim
In that and only that I *stand* and *wait*.

xxxiii. The herdsman sees a price tag on his sheep
And I have mine - the herdsman's price is paid
To him, but mine's a social price - a cruel
Drawn metaphor that marks me worse than sheep.

xxxiv. Thus I am grown and life's prime want is work -
Those who can, do - I think I'm one who can't,
The unemployed, eternal student writes,
And is ambivalent about his verse.

xxxv. I write to try to exorcise my faults
Of mind and use the tools to hand, but then
I have an audience of kith and kin,
And you? - why should you read my therapy?

xxxvi. But ending this digression, if the tale's
Not told with *sound* and *fury*, think in terms
Of authorship, as this does not debar
An idiot savant without savoir.

xxxvii. Some years ago and for a time I drank
And used the loan of banks to pay for drink
And thus I am in debt beyond my means
And have to deal with this uncertainty.

xxxviii. My psychiatric state gives reason for
But not excuse and after all I spent
The money that was loaned to me, and so,
The right remains with my kind creditors.

xxxix. And debt's another disability:
Constrained in finances in this the world
That is gymnasium of proud display
Of wealth and economic exercise.

xl. I seem to lack a limb or two compared
To most, and though competing like with like
I'd pull my weight, arrayed against athletes
With finances comparison but fails.

xli. Some apparatus are beyond my grasp;
Some disciplines requiring ready cash:
To vault the horse demands a credit card:
To try the high jump needs both stocks and shares.

xlii. Athletes win audience' applause and fame,
And as for me, I'm in the running too
I jog the hundred metres day on day
The art is in the paucity of funds.

xliii. To change the metaphor: like bodily
Disease which comes and goes ignoring pills,
I pray against an almost certain end
With prophylaxis my enduring hope.

xliv. I pay a token sum to those I owe
Abating wrath as pills deny a fate
But need prepare for financial collapse
To strike whenever creditors so choose.

xlv. As with much in my life, my condition
Is caused by me, and hence I don't deserve
Of aid or help - so not to waste more hard
Earned cash, my father's struck me from his will.

xlvi. And like with suffering from a condition
Not all, but certain things, are off-limits:
A house, a car, to quote the obvious,
But mostly luxuries you take as read.

xlvii. The social drink as gazing at the sky,
The evening out, as getting out of bed
The holiday, as taking some fresh air,
The little treats, supplied utilities.

xlviii. This debt compares to minor condition
Which could without announcement develop,
The threat is always there - and case with case
There's worry built into the interface.

xlix. As *Dr. Swift* a time, I've been confined -
Comparison ends there, as I can't rise
To satirise the day's insanity
As seen in *Swift's Digression on Madness*.

l. I know for one that *Swift* would disagree
But from my disadvantaged point of view
Asylum's joke (or humorous aspect)
Is somewhat lost on me, I fail to laugh.

li. If you are mad you're locked up with the mad -
And where exactly is the sense in that?
A fate like this would drive the sane insane,
The sane, who both approve and are exempt.

lii. Your mind is taxed, the treatment: tax it more;
And you would be forgiven if you thought
That treatment such as this is punishment -
I wish asylum were a sanctuary.

liii. The glaring contradictions of the place:
All day and night you are observed, and paid
Professionals attempt to get inside
Your head, your very thoughts are monitored.

liv. Released and overlooked still by a team,
Professionals maintain questioning probe:
But dare to think that people take notice
Of thoughts of yours, and Bedlam calls again.

lv. Opinion seems to rule in hospital,
And not the act or fact of having done
But some opinion that you may is key:
Of course, here, their opinion counts, not yours.

lvi. And thus they handle putatives and deal
Them out as absolutes - "Although you've not,
We think you may, harm self or others, stay
Here under lock and key for three full moons."

lvii. Enacting legislation, some third way
(Between opinion and the fact that some
Detained are less than mad) was right designed:
Voluntary status, that is not well used.

lviii. After some months I earned such status - I
Was free by law to leave the ward as wished
And on the door of ward a notice: We'll
Unlock this door for voluntary patients.

lix. And not surprisingly I asked for leave
And I was sectioned against my will,
As their opinion was 'To ask was proof
That I was mad', I lost my "right" to leave.

lx. Pivotal to asylum is treatment
Through institutionalisation - and
As such prepared me for that that followed:
Move to hostel: a bitter draught, smooth flowed.

lxi. My residence a year, in two hostels,
And moved from one to other on the grounds
Of fervent clash of personalities
Between me and another resident.

lxii. As with asylum, these hostels require
The resident to share their living space
With mixed unfortunates laid low like them -
The difference here, at times unsupervised.

lxiii. Hostel's own-brand of communality
That takes hold has a different feel to that
Which shows itself in some shared flat or house,
And that because necessity prevails.

lxiv. I learnt I needed regimented ways
And attitudes, to deal with aspects and parts
Of hostel life, in order to survive
The everyday of living on the fringe.

lxv. The process is to be accustomised
(As barn yard animals) to what's required
And nothing more - there is a lock on door,
But should you lock before you take a leak?

lxvi. There is a roof, a roof as none call home -
There's running water gracing shared bathrooms,
But differing flaws in cleanliness will mean
A Herculean task to keep them clean.

lxvii. Thus farmer fattens cows and cares for health:
Yet these (the beasts of burden) occupy
A plastic world, shadowed reality:
A hostel is a living hall of shade.

lxviii. The *vanity* of *days* is overwhelmed
By that *remorse* which should confine itself
To restless *nights* of angst - as if the ox
Both thought and dreamt the death of abattoir.

lxix. Each day the same, but undesired routine,
The cow must tire of straw, so I too tired
Of sandwiches, of suffering company,
The cloying ease had from surrounding barn.

lxx. People who live in hostels have no choice
And it is test of character, of faith,
Of endurance, and grants humble degree
Preparing one to live a normal life.

lxxi. Although this is obscure non-recognised
Degree, and no one says you've passed the test;
It seems a mark of hardship best withheld,
A level they may mark for or against.

lxxii. "I live in homeless hostel" - as opening
Gambit in conversation you're in luck
To fail - although I'd say if you succeed
To gain reply, beware where it will lead.

lxxiii. And from my tone so far you might suppose
That I was housed in sink estate, without
But choice to hear the hapless tenant's sigh
Reverberate around poor council walls.

lxxiv. You'd guess incorrectly, here's how things worked:
As *Sisyphus* I'd been told 'Try your luck
On general housing queue', months ticked away,
I slipped in list, labour increased with time.

lxxv. As it became clear I would never through
The wait be housed - belatedly, and as
Should have happened at first - my name and I
Were placed on *Mental Health Sub-Register*.

lxxvi. And on this scheme, having waited a year,
I was told to expect a wait of two
More years - succulent fruit that *tantalised*:
Lifetime's security of tenancy.

lxxvii. And as I floated, bobbing in the pool
My father threw a line, the which I caught
(In spite of self and wave on wave of doubt)
And changed my circumstance to that of now.

lxxviii. I rent in private sector, have forgone
My right to social housing - if I'm well,
And keep from woe, the choice is choice - but if
I'm ill again I've chosen for the worse.

lxxix. As with option of choosing company:
Some one may thrive in each, but stays moulded
By that that's kept - though to maintain or win
Stability must be the utmost goal.

lxxx. To choose as I have chosen is to pray
To God (as those in times of trouble pray)
(A prayer which must be often offered up)
That future won't resemble past or now.

lxxxi. And supplicating, Lord I pray to *catch*
A falling star whose wish would *teach me* then
To *hear mermaids singing* of *advancement*
Of *honest mind*, that which I lack and yearn.

lxxxii. And would with ease forget *where past years are*:
Resigning youth to youth, for it to stay
Folly's uncriticised oblivion,
Mistakes remaining past, and lessons learnt.

lxxxiii. And yet would know who *cleft the devil's foot*:
And thus remain alert to erring me,
And through maturity reform myself
To one characterised as sound of health.

lxxxiv. As far as housing is concerned, I chose;
To make and reach and weigh and ponder such
A stark and fraught decision broke the mould,
I'll only know result as times unfold.

lxxxv. Of prime import, my current state of health,
If, viewed as *Rosicrucian* spirit world,
Is, ruled by *Sylphs* of air who help and aid,
And demon *Gnomes* delighting in mischief.

lxxxvi. *What dire offence* from inner *causes springs*,
What mighty internal *contests* arise
From *trivial things* - thus the *Gnomes* induce
Errant small thoughts which develop mayhem!

lxxxvii. And at this point in time I have a train
Of *Sylphs*, that few'd envy in power or strength
Or number, but whose grace I find central
To my attempts to cope with everyday.

lxxxviii. There is a *Sylph* that whispers in my ear
At times of drowsing night 'Arise from sleep
As you forgot to take your pills', protects
Me from insanity of oversight.

lxxxix. The *Gnomes* assist the *rape* of sanity,
Fragile unguarded pendant hanging loose,
The fruit of seasons' labour ripening soft,
But open to suggestion's rotting worm.

xc. So now, the *Gnomes* are there, so too the *Sylphs,*
And they remain in equilibrium:
Interpreted as thus I'm blessed and damned
With *spirits* like these, and always will be.

xci. My sanity's my *craft or sullen art*
That's *exercised* in quiet solitude
And nurtured by the *raging* phasing *moon*
I keep a watch on me whilst others sleep.

xcii. I *labour*, guiding thoughts and *singing light*,
Not for ambition, not for strength or *bread*,
Nor *strut and trade of charms* of vanity,
But *for the common wage* of balanced *heart*.

xciii. Not for psychiatrists *apart from* life
And *raging moon* I comb my *spindrift* thoughts;
Not for the systems of the *towering dead*
Who have their students, *nightingales and psalms*.

xciv. But for the right to gain introduction
To that that's known by name "normality"
And if admitted it will be in spite,
Will be ignoring, *craft or sullen art*.

xcv. And with this effort, now as where I stand,
I'm on the road between one place and next:
I am not mad and yet I am not sane,
With middling grace I'm neither up nor down.

xcvi. There's few would like to take my place in life,
But let me say, this half stability,
To what I've known, is comparable to bliss,
I'd not complain to have a life like this.

xcvii. And state of my postgraduate studies
Would seem to be a *dream within a dream,*
Withering to hopeless, from former base
Promising then to flower to PhD.

xcviii. Futile research project *take this*, a *kiss,*
Upon your *brow* of time and effort, and
In parting from you now, with supervised
And peered assent *thus much let me avow*.

xcix. *You are not wrong, who deem* that my attempt
At PhD has *been a dream*, nourished
By superficial praise and dilettante
Association with the state of art.

c. And *yet if Hope has flown away* from me
Receding *in a night, or in a day*,
Retreating *in a vision, or in none,*
Is it therefore any *less gone* away?

ci. Both academic and worldly projects,
Those that have known success, those that have failed,
All that is seen as seen or seems to be
Is nothing more than *dream within a dream*.

cii. In vain attempt to gain my PhD
I stand amid the roar of crashing waves
And overpowered by depth's profundity,
I listen to *a surf-tormented shore*.

ciii. And on this shore I'm overcome with doubt
My emptiness compared to majesty
And looking to my humble palm *I hold*
Within my hand some grains of *golden sand*.

civ. How few, *yet how they creep* and slide and flow,
Advancing *through my fingers to the deep*
As if through loss they were creating more
Lacunae in my brain (already worn).

cv. And as they creep I fret in my worry,
How few are left in my possession's hold,
Oh stars above! Poseidon's wave! *O God!*
Can I not grasp them with a tighter clasp.

cvi. Although perhaps I could but *save* just *one*
From drowning loss in this *pitiless wave;*
Perhaps as alteration I pursue
The lesser sought MPhil not PhD.

cvii. Proposed solution is a compromise
And no more means I'll grasp a grain of sand,
Study both suits and aids the young, I'm not,
Perhaps I should retire before I'm failed.

cviii. And straight my outlook has turned full circle,
And like solipsism, the view becomes
A question: *is all that we see or seem*
But nothing more than *dream within a dream*?

cix. My age remains intermediate and knows
(Or senses) youthful passion's foolishness,
And not yet come to know serenity
Of comprehension, that which comes with age.

cx. Not yet I ask for sages to *consume*
My heart away - I don't yet see the thing
As sick with massed *desire*'s unwanted fumes,
And *fastened to a dying animal*.

cxi. Between two places, still my heart remains
Attached to animal that's animate,
Perhaps a jumping frog with but one leg,
Thus I desire to write and not to act.

cxii. And were my death to be announced as sure,
And were I granted *Last Confession*'s rights,
On love I would not say *I gave my soul*
And loved in misery - there was a point.

cxiii. There was a point - as said in other's words
Much better to have loved and lost - my age
Does not constrict my memory that I
Forget desire as it was meant to be.

cxiv. And it is *Tom the Lunatic* who when
Confronted by a changing world questions
The world: '*What change has put my thoughts astray*
And changes *eyes that had so keen a sight?*'

cxv. I've not yet reached the state that sees decay
In self and thus the world - I'd not question
As Tom would: '*What has turned to smoking wick*'
Eternal '*nature's pure unchanging light?*'

cxvi. My faculties decline (like memory)
But to forget the days events is form
Of blessing, and I see that neither days
Long past nor those of youth were different world.

cxvii. And then a whisper to cool heart of stone,
Earth, beautiful and in *anxiety*,
Mouths '*All true love must die alter at best*
Into some lesser thing - prove that I lie.'

cxviii. I'll prove the lie - compare eternity
And anything will die, and yet it lives;
Earth: 'Love is dead and all true love must die'
Eternal youth: 'Long life to love and me'.

cxix. The source of these are from the same, I must
Be even handed with *Friends of His Youth*,
And there on age he says: '*Laughter not time*
Destroyed my voice and put that crack in it'.

cxx. And is his laughter serious? maybe -
I would discount his misery in jest,
But if he jests, perhaps the different wage
Is my intermediate against his age.

cxxi. And now I think of past abilities,
Of those comparisons which showed me well,
And thinking this I think of where I stood
And wonder just what could have been achieved.

cxxii. Although, if *success is counted sweetest*
By those who ne'er succeed, in later life
I have the claim to count it sweet as said
And more so having tasted it in youth.

cxxiii. To quote more: *to comprehend a nectar*
Requires sorest need; though I know the need
I do not think I comprehend the prize -
Is my necessity not strong enough?

cxxiv. Although *not one of all the purple Host*
Who took the Flag today (not one of them)
Can tell the definition (knows the need)
So clear of Victory (that sweet success).

cxxv. *As he defeated - dying* - (sorest need)
On whose forbidden ear (necessity)
The distant strains of triumph (their success)
Burst agonised and clear! (stark opposites).

cxxvi. And so there's those who know more of success
Through having lost or won the battle that
I will not fight, through having gambled all
And having seen the black or red come up.

cxxvii. So I avoid the loss, and thus the gain,
So I avoid the game, no longer know
Just what it means to stake that which I have
And loose or win, to learn to know success.

cxxviii. And in this way I aim for less than then
Which dovetails with decline in what I can;
I think it's fair to say abilities
Recede with age, things worsen overall.

cxxix. *The Heart asks pleasure - first* - I asked respect
And then - Excuse from Pain - and then I asked
Could I be left to get along with things
As my abilities were not so good.

cxxx. *And then - those little anodynes* and then
That deaden suffering - and then I asked
To be excused (not being up to date)
From any piece of work that was not mine.

cxxxi. *And then - to go to sleep* - (to give up work)
And then - if it should be (if it should be)
The will of its Inquisitor (required)
The privilege to die - (retire early).

cxxxii. I could and now I can't - this is the case -
And whether it's result of age or drink
Or psychiatric ills (or all I grant)
It makes no odds - I could and now I can't.

cxxxiii. When it comes to my hope I'm fond of *Swift*
Lay *Pope* his wit and poesy aside:
It should be said along with he who wrote
That *proper study of mankind is man*.
cxxxiv. And if I tune my ears to hopes and fears
Set forth by *Swift* I find despite the march
Of centuries, the common grounds of thoughts
Of everyday reverberate through time.
cxxxv. She: "*Come buy my fine Wares*", she: "*Plumbs, Apples
And Pears*", "*A hundred a Penny*" and sells
"*In conscience too many*" yet pleads "*Come will
You have any*" - would catch anyone's ear.
cxxxvi. There's no pretence in plums, apples and pears:
These lack the decorations seen in much
That should be simple prosody - I praise
Such use of basic thoughts in rhyme and verse.
cxxxvii. She: "Come, follow me by the smell" and she
Proceeds: "Here's delicate Onyons to sell"
"They make the Blood warmer", "You'll feel like a
Farmer" - a pitch independent of rank.
cxxxviii. There's scarce any pretence in fruit 'n' veg:
And were we all to wish to warm our blood,
And feel like a farmer, much of the world's
Complexity, as dirt, might fall from us.
cxxxix. A third and final quote as gem from *Swift*
All three from *Verses made for* those *who cry*:
The voice of market traders caught in print
And still echoing through hundreds of years.
cxl. "Be not sparing", "Leave off swearing" she cries
"Buy my Herring" all "Fresh from Malahide"
Plus "Better ne'er was try'd" - who could refuse,
Thus prompted anyone would dine on fish.
cxli. Apples, onion and herring: if that were
Everyone's appetite, then gone the need
For 4x4's the size of small lorries
And men in suits that gamble your money.
cxlii. I think the most aspire to try the world
That *Pope* describes - ask one hundred women
If they'd prefer to cry as *Swift's* or if
They'd rather dress as *Pope's* charmed *Belinda*:
cxliii. "*Unnumber'd treasures ope at once, and here
The various offerings of the world appear",
"This casket India's glowing gems unlocks
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box*",
cxliv. Some hopes are tailored to reality -
Without such tailoring I wouldn't say:
In way of rhymes I prefer *Swift's* to *Pope's*
And thus revert to common tastes and hopes.

BOOK III – SQUANDERED OPPORTUNITIES

i. Say, what should be if it should come to pass
That child of yours abandons favourite themes
Not through their inclinations or their wish
But through a strong parental influence?

ii. What if a father were to use a bribe
In order to encourage his own child
To choose a course and university
Because that's what he wished that he had done?

iii. What were a child as ignorant of worth
To see this bribe as motivating cause
In blithe decision as to what's the best,
In choosing matters that mould things to come?

iv. Ignore the questions, as this came to be:
And ask the question that these three contain
Their opposite reveals the matter straight:
What would have happened were this not the case?

v. In asking so we leave the narrative
Entering the lair of chance hypothesis;
Were not our nation's aims construed on such,
This verse's topic would not venture there.

vi. So let us leave our child (as is the case)
Directed by well meant paternal bribes,
And see the ends that it might well have met
Spurred on with more self-willing tendencies.

vii. The youth, following natural aptitudes
And knowing growth at university,
Would automatically be drawn to learn
And concentrate on academia.

viii. This student might discover joys of mind
Pursuing comprehended favourite themes
And even if he failed to win some prize
Would gain enjoyment from the chosen course.

ix. The youth could form friendships on marks of worth
On marks of other youths' abilities,
Ignoring social status (which forms pride),
Ignoring superficial game and laugh.

x. The student might avoid (or be shunned by)
Societies where drinking played a role,
Prefer the library to the *Shakespeare's Head*,
And pushed might choose a book before a beer.

xi. A good degree obtained in likelihood,
With it, firm understanding of the field
Because as chosen by the youth, not for,
And thus he'd show interest in learning's ways.

xii. A different course, by Jove, a different man;
A different university: changed youth;
Deep draughts (not beer) but from knowledge's font
Form modest and a sober disputant.

xiii. There's something wrong here, we cannot proceed
There are some fundamental flaws in this:
First, isn't someone wishing on themselves
A role below first rung of social norms.

xiv. *If pushed might choose a book before a beer?*
In life preferring study over play?
You can be sure that such as these exist
But show the ones that wish it on themselves.

xv. But hindsight thus as speaking in reply:
'*When* he *considers how* his *light is spent*
Ere half his *days in this dark world and wide*
He stands in awe at waste and idleness.'

xvi. A love of books is wished upon the youth
As having seen what other passions do:
A steadfast mind in front of social wiles
Has never harmed possessor or the crowd.

xvii. This were a favour to the student youth
And such a course would guard against that drive,
That untempered alcoholic desire,
That cause of ruin running through his life.

xviii. The model is not too extreme to serve:
Many the student must apply themselves,
For each barfly there's one that loves to learn,
For each and every sot there is a swot.

xix. That said, to second fundamental flaw:
In life we have no less than reprobate,
With change of course we have a geek or nerd:
When did subject of study change a man?

xx. The choice of subject is but secondary
To person's composition - character -
The latter moulds the way the chance is formed
And makes or breaks the opportunity.

xxi. And seen objectively, this small difference
Would go no way to fundamental shift
And would not hold the power so to mutate
And change inebriations phenotype.

xxii. It seems that aptitude (or lack of that)
Follows a person in their path through life:
Donne, leaving youthful poetry behind,
Applied and so turned able clergyman.

xxiii. Were Gordon Brown to turn his hand to verse
We'd still expect an economic sham
With windfall tax on other's prosody
And borrowing from couplets left and right.

xxiv. These two examples show consistency
As it would seem the youthful student would:
Small chance of pupal metamorphosis
Through change as insignificant as this.

xxv. Hold on, there's something further in our road!
In both projected scheme of things and flaws
We see propounded opposite extremes
With scant regard to chance of middle path.

xxvi. And thus he spoke of life's enduring traits,
Whilst other side described the mould of youth;
And neither one of these extremes is right
Realities will rest between the two.

xxvii. So when he said of Donne and Gordon Brown
(When fuelling fervour's fire of his extreme)
Examples weren't in youth - and what had Donne
Not learnt in youth the modes of scholarship?

xxviii. He was a bit unfair to Gordon Brown:
With verse just like the world's economy
In stark decline; this true for all who try,
Despite the muse the parapet's a hell.

xxix. What's being said is thus: ignore the fact
That others may or may not demonstrate
Consistency with self in later years,
We talk of formative experience.

xxx. The change considered for the student youth
Is in those days when character is formed
And but a slight incline to left or right
Could steer development a better way.

xxxi. Of course, this short of outright victory,
But still a battle won in that campaign;
It would have been a nudge towards the goal
A gifted block which could be used to build.

xxxii. And in proposer's favour, weak or strong:
We are allowed to dream and cast our minds
To fantasy and ifs, and failing such
We'd be no more than objects lacking will.

xxxiii. But let's avoid proposed extremities,
Interrupted in talk of middle path;
This path the one that's frequently followed,
What had our student youth so done the same?

xxxiv. With change of course a change in attitude
Neither from black to white nor bad to good
But from a darker shade of grey to light
No reprobate, perhaps he'd normalise.

xxxv. The love of learning might not transplant whole
But rather graft a shoot to living stem
And thus although the whole were not in bloom
The living plant would bear forth study's flower.

xxxvi. The change of course, not cause of abstinence
But might have gone some way to putting stop
To what occurred - youth spending his third year
Pursuing nothing but his love of beer.

xxxvii. Now we've exhausted our hypotheses
Hypothesising grounds of what if not,
So, in related mode then let's explore
What further might have come to pass, what if?

xxxviii. The student won and took his father's bribe,
And started out following chosen course
With some amount of trailing aptitude,
But gave himself but small encouragement.

xxxix. Following three years having tried to learn -
Tutorial investment in the self -
Our student laboured to do worse than fail:
He didn't sit exams for his degree.

xl. There was a course of further study set,
Continuance for good career in place,
His action quite reduced such plans to nought,
This marked an end to smooth development.

xli. The youth returned, and at a later date
Applied himself, obtained a poor degree,
With all his plans for future ease and weal
Reduced to short-term plans for short-term gain.

xlii. This act as seen by those who knew the man;
The greatest self-affliction whilst still sane:
A discarded gift opportunity:
The act and point that disappoints the most.

xliii. Had this not been they saw relaxing life,
Unfolding luxury and contentment,
What each mother would wish upon a son,
What most father's know pride to know achieved.

xliv. They saw a wasted chance of proportion,
They saw a winning ticket thrown away,
They saw prospective jackpot within reach,
Son dropping out when on the brink of ease.

xlv. This chaos, seen by those who knew the man,
Example of a traffic accident:
As man mown down not taking care on roads,
Not realising chance of injury.

xlvi. If he'd but looked, all would be fine and good,
Perhaps he didn't know the road so well,
We trust he hadn't had a drink that day,
Oh heavens! what a dreadful accident.

xlvii. And then they see before and afterwards
As if the accident had changed the man,
As if the person so divides in two:
One after, one before, the day that's marked.

xlviii. This was the fateful choice he can't reclaim,
This was the act from which there's no return,
As when bold Caesar crossed the Rubicon
But in this case, retreat, not moving on.

xlix. Although residing in this attitude's
A falsity which when it's understood
Perhaps not tilts but alters balance scale
Slightly in favour of the ailing youth.

l. All was not well, nor had so been a while,
The university and course were geared
To that conduct equating those of class:
To high abilities, beyond the norm,

li. Our student mingled, trying, didn't match,
Began to learn, no sooner overwhelmed,
The choice of course remained his father's choice,
Perhaps his father would have flourished well.

lii. The listing ship was holed and bound to sink,
Our student mixed with, did not join elites,
The Battle of the Books inspired a fear:
Appraising, disaster was due to strike.

liii. Truth to be told, he'd killed his waking soul,
And being dead though nonetheless awake,
Wore his own effigy around his neck,
A self-made mark which meant he'd fail in all.

liv. Ambition's full with ambiguity,
But he had ceased aspiring, ceased to yearn,
He wouldn't raise his eyes to meet the sky,
He'd greet each morning with a heavy heart.

lv. Around this time he felt that he'd been caged
What matter if his bars persist self-wrought;
The observing soul needn't be astute
To see him captured in a gilded cage.

lvi. Through stress, both external and internal,
He'd grown to be at odds with ruling world:
Over several years his once tender grip
On actualities had given way.

lvii. And this was not psychiatric illness
(No more than arguments presage divorce)
Although psychiatric illness followed
And would have come excepting total ease.

lviii. Perhaps the choice a wise decree of fate
Excluding student from a stressful path
That would have generated like illness
With double blow of lost career and mind.

lix. Much for the better separate the two
Than leave the student wondering on ifs:
The pain to think that he'd have had success
Had he not lost his mind might break the strong.

lx. It may appear an academic thought,
And such ones, as precluding bitterness,
Are preferably kept to yourself, kept hushed:
Much better throw yourself than have been pushed.

lxi. And if the causes were to be explored
There would be found merged and intermingled
A one as feeding others and as fed:
The curse of actuated love of drink.

lxii. In woe the bottle offers many charms
And in this case represented Lethe:
Her calming waters of forgetfulness
The balm that's not to think of anything.

lxiii. There battled in uncomprehending mind
Exams to come and learning mounds by rote,
Comparison to those who were well formed,
And this was swapped for ease with but one drink.

lxiv. With great naivety he held in thought
That there must be another simpler way
Some other path through life's harsh veil of thorns,
Not having seen the slightest sight of woe.

lxv. At times his self from self seemed evanesced,
He played the fool without intelligence,
And this a recipe of certainty
For proving him below an idiot.

lxvi. And all this came from, and led back to drink,
Not to maintain without an anodyne,
Encouraged by the self-same poisoned salve
Which made excrescences of failing traits.

lxvii. And if there was a single fateful day
Then was the day with means and will to drink
He reached the age of his independence
And started to frequent the public house.

lxviii. And if there was a single fateful day
Then take the day of tender teenage youth
That bribe was offered (we'll admit well meant)
To fix his course and university.

lxix. And if there was indeed a fateful day
Then mark the day he first felt singled out,
That day he first felt different to his peers,
And saw himself a separate type or kind.

lxx. Alienated individuals drink
And just as much, drinking alienates:
Our self-afflicted student felt apart,
This cause of thirst with others stated here.

lxxi. The Book before last he told of himself
And there follows a Book on alcohol,
Perhaps you're starting to discriminate
The overlaps and joins between the two.

lxxii. Oh would that we could make a joke of it
Somehow cash it in for a chink of mirth,
Oh gramercy! but none of him's plastic,
That means instead of laughter, it's tragic.

lxxiii. Count (a) and (b) as one, so let's relate
The squandered opportunity that's two:
In class it's down a notch or two in state
But nonetheless this chance was wasted chance.

lxxiv. Two years had passed since act of dropping out,
Our student no more student, not a youth,
But youthful man in search of greener grass
Had moved abroad with hopes of finding self.

lxxv. And something that he found, that slid to place,
A little ease he's only once since found
(Not standard for a generation past):
A stable job that paid food, rent and more.

lxxvi. And here he worked his days, sometimes his nights,
A factory small in size, amicable,
And its purpose, to duplicate software
For firms' promotions or advertisements.

lxxvii. His tasks began with standard manual work
Monotony of which he could endure,
It brought a pride to work ten thousand piece
And see them packaged for delivery.

lxxviii. And gradually his skill-set extended
And he'd manage many aspects of work
From ordering to sending out a bill,
He had been taught with eye to competence.

lxxix. And where he should have seen a job for life
In ignorance he saw an hourly rate,
And when he should have thought symbiosis
He never thought beyond his daily task.

lxxx. The time a time of sound self-subsistence,
The rent was paid, necessities were bought,
And over was enough to have a drink,
And that well earned by him who's working hard.

lxxxi. And youth would not aspire to such a life,
Although there's some adults, not jump at it,
But with a sense of resignation, see
There are few better offers to be had.

lxxxii. Our grown up youthful man is such a one
And looking back upon vicissitudes
But yearns a little share of certainty
To work and earn a living and unwind.

lxxxiii. To overpass such opportunity
Is next to nought if moving on in life:
Though as my fate would wildly vacillate,
Return of thoughts is marked with some regret.

lxxxiv. If move was accompanied by guarantee
That some such job became available,
With implications all outside his ken,
He'd have some thoughts, but move abroad again.

lxxxv. Follows the squandered chance that's number three,
Although this was more like a massacre
Of all and everything that he held dear,
All jettisoned for burning passion's flame.

lxxxvi. Four years had passed and he still lived abroad,
He'd place at foreign university,
He was married, his wife was kind and good,
And brave to take a husband diagnosed.

lxxxvii. His wife arranged to be some time away,
He could not see the continuity
And fell in love with other wingéd soul,
The tracks that led to second marriage train.

lxxxviii. And all converged on this important time,
Our student youth (for that he was again)
Was drinking, verging on insanity,
And, that to him anathema, in love.

lxxxix. With passion he rejected all that's old
For new found love (and cursed her with his faults)
And leaving all the ease he'd known abroad,
Deserting loving wife, moved to London.

xc. The choice reflected his decisiveness,
Though motivations still remain obscured -
That meaning that they stay unclear to him -
And thus as such, perhaps are hid from you.

xci. A clarity surrounded this his choice
And nothing in equation was unknown
And barring obfuscation of his thought
A choice of (dare we say) a reasoned mind.

xcii. The choice so made was his and his alone,
No other agent forced his thought in this,
Indeed it might be said he forced the choice
On she who'd earned and loved independence.

xciii. The choice was bad and so the choice was good,
The choice was wrong and so the choice was right,
The choice was just as inconsiderate
As unconsidered, choice here chose itself.

xciv. And he regrets the choice for pain he caused
Not just to first, also to second wife,
And he regrets the choice as later on
The second suffered past her tender scope.

xcv. And to himself he didn't learn to say
What should be obvious to all who hear
(Irrespective of what they think of him)
He, slow in learning: "Better none than two".

xcvi. And looking back he sees two separate lives
Without the clue that he's the causal link
Between the stages that are one and three,
Again he lacks a continuity.

xcvii. And he can see that there is common ground
Between his love and his insanity,
And since he views his form of love as base
Perhaps the link's deluded love of self.

xcviii. There'd seem an infantile design of love
(A precursor to weighed maturer kind)
That reifies the object of desire
And loves in company more than apart.

xcix. And through this kind, aspiring to the loved
Revolves round self, as if the self's served first,
The boundless joy to see the other one
Is but a way to gratify the self.

c. There is a second selfish mode to love
And that is that the tokens from the loved
Are weighed beyond what is reality,
Each word and gesture is referred to self.

ci. This said, this love may not be infantile
And maybe most love raises worth of self,
And just he's burnt by love's consuming flame
In ways that others are protected from.

cii. Regardless, with indulgent company
And blithe interpretations on love's trade
The self succumbs to flattery of mind
And sees import in place of seeing none.

ciii. This flattery of mind is just the way
Insanity so tricks the self to gain
The preferment of feckless thoughts and ways
That win their place in some enfeebled mind.

civ. Say what you will, love and insanity
Are both infectious, each to some degree,
The one a passion, other like disease
Which can transfer on touch as like a heat.

cv. And there was some of this with second wife,
She was intoxicated (or sent mad)
With fumes of passion (base the mix, or pure):
She didn't find herself her normal self.

cvi. And recollecting on this time she said
She saw herself as bordering on the mad,
She didn't feel somehow that she was sane,
She didn't comprehend the choice she made.

cvii. Hindsight can be as flawed as some foresight,
She didn't understand but yet she chose:
A rash insanity or form of love
One or the other motivation pricked.

cviii. And even though he might have been insane
(And minds associate when they are near)
Still he would like to think of it as love
(A union based on madness - skies above!)

cix. And leaving this digression to one side
Let us return to waste and squandering ways:
Before all else what he has lost is mind,
Through alcohol and continual misuse.

cx. When viewing those declining powers of mind
The first to fail - association's leap;
Ability with ease to bound and jump
From this to that in conversation's course.

cxi. This essential leaven, ingredient,
That liberates the running play of thought,
That makes the talk a joy and not a woe,
The driving engine to a train of thought.

cxii. His power to make a join of thought is gone
The skill is not deficient, it is dead,
And in attempts to resurrect itself
Result is like a putrid zombie's dance.

cxiii. And do you know the actress, stars a role
In such and such, she's in the news today?
And it is true he wouldn't recognise
The star if she turned barber, cut his hair.

cxiv. And with this ignorance of current views
Runs parallel the inability
To make associations, trim or glib,
Which might dovetail with that which others think.

cxv. And recently we went on holiday
To southern France, lovely this time of year:
He says he's heard the food and wine are good
And thinks he'd better button other thoughts.

cxvi. You said you've eaten in that noodle bar
The ambience is tempting, how's the food?
He slurs a non-committal "OK, s'pose"
And lacking metaphor says less than nought.

cxvii. As far as love of poetry's concerned,
The bard! how do you rate Shakespeare's sonnets?
Straight faced he says the woman who's addressed
She must have made someone a stunning bride.

cxviii. And then your love of literature as next,
And currently you're reading Laurence Sterne?
He says he wished the author talked the less,
The book would be improved if there were plot.

cxix. Although he never had the gift of gab
More than in past, associations fail:
The simple thing to say is in his grasp
But when required is shy of utterance.

cxx. And tied with this in conversation's play
He will attempt to make connecting links
The gist of which defies the best of sense
And leaves the interactors thinking 'Whence?'

cxxi. Adjunctive to association's lack
He suffers from a failing memory
And that which used to be a pride in him
Reduced from what it was in perfect health.
cxxii. And where were we? memor...? memorial!
He can't remember on the left or right
But isn't there a list of those who died
In time of war on entering Waterloo?
cxxiii. What was said? ...orial? tutorial!
He's still attending university,
In past he has forgotten to prepare
When he and tutor made a plan to meet.
cxxiv. He can remember theme - tutor? Tudor!
There is a charming Tudor edifice
Here in central London on High Holborn ...
It's just he can't recall if mock or real.
cxxv. London, that majestic city, London:
He questions whether it's a love or hate
That motivates his lasting residence;
Like so much else the reason's slipped his mind.
cxxvi. The talk has turned to that of love and hate:
He doesn't dote or show a bitterness,
Forgetfulness is source of attitudes
And all is viewed in mind as having passed.
cxxvii. And now he thinks the talk's of bitterness:
A gin, tonic and bitters has a name,
He's quite forgotten though, what it is called,
He knows he used to drink them in that pub.
cxxviii. And then that pub of course he can't recall:
He thinks the place was on a busy road,
And most the tables either square or round,
The serving staff appeared as friendly souls.
cxxix. With this the state of memory is piqued
In that what came before was far from this:
There was a time a printed text as read
Was paired and equal to a text as learnt.
cxxx. There was a time when thoughts and facts adhered
Dovetailed as through association's strength,
With each archived to lasting memory
And leaving clear impressions on the brain.
cxxxi. For him those days begin to fade with age:
In case of learning, work replaces ease,
In lieu of relaxation's overview,
He's straining to focus on things narrow.
cxxxii. He takes inventory of what he's left,
With honesty, and looking to himself
He only hopes and prays forgetfulness
Does not go hand in hand with hopelessness.

cxxxiii. And with association and recall
Impaired with chronological ascent
Knowledge crumbles, recedes into decline,
To point where factual lack is cause of woe.

cxxxiv. And his acquaintance with the world is scant
With scarce an actual source that's utilised
He doesn't try to read between the lines,
The lines ignored for fear they enervate.

cxxxv. He rarely reads the daily newspaper:
For different reasons he's attracted by
Those papers previously named broadsheets,
And on the tube, he'll read what's offered free.

cxxxvi. The former just describe the world of news
According to agenda which they set,
To disentangle what is actual fact
From journalistic angle needs explained.

cxxxvii. To read the latter you'd be led to think
Celebrity lifestyle within your reach
And that you'll be the victim of a crime
Before you've read the paper end to end.

cxxxviii. And thus, mostly, he chooses not to read:
And in his ignorance of world events,
Celebrity, gossip, and what's called news,
He is limited in discussion's scope.

cxxxix. He finds in television laxity,
Not in morals, but his suggested thought,
For him suspension of his disbelief
Extends beyond the reach of programmes watched.

cxl. This marks him off from others as naive
As others know the bounds of real and false:
Regardless, God could spend eternity
In watching television, not alone.

cxli. And as he doesn't read or watch TV
He has a slender grasp of politics:
Topic which often leads to argument
And leaving wish that things were left unsaid.

cxlii. And as regards his blinkered views on this
His attitudes reflect an ethos, gleaned
From thoughts received in days of yesteryear,
Outmoded at the moment they were formed.

cxliii. And thus there's little knowledge in his head
Although that is the way he's chosen it:
For fair or foul he's started down the road
That's signposted: 'A barren soil that's pure'.

cxliv. Just think of those required ingredients
For able conversation's lilting flow:
Association, knowledge, memory:
They intertwine and he's short on all three.

BOOK IV – COMPLEXITIES OF OCCUPATION

i. In recent years I've worked in offices
And baulk at finding their environment
A social one that's harsh in attitude
Requiring skills that I do not possess.

ii. A competence for which I have to work
Is social grace, that sought ability
To say hello and gain a kind reply,
Or use the universal gift: small talk.

iii. I fail to make attempts at light exchange
And when I make attempts they miss the mark,
Ignoring conversation's interplay
My void words isolate themselves and me.

iv. And thus my lame attempts to interact
Akin to walking on a crippled leg:
The limping gait, a source of fun to some,
Remains to me a disability.

v. It's not the fact I'm silent like a mouse,
It's what I say and how it comes across:
I speak intending equanimity
But show emotions which were better hid.

vi. And I sometimes assume too much by way
Of common frame of reference between
The other person speaking and myself;
The dialogue decays to monologue.

vii. Then I assume too little overlap
Of common frame of reference between
The other person speaking and myself,
And thus unwittingly I patronise.

viii. But most it must be said that I'm unclear:
Initially I think I know my ground
But with discussion comprehension shifts;
Confusion takes the place of certainty.

ix. These inabilities are keen perceived
And I may criticise myself the more
Than others do for given weaknesses;
I strongly feel my lack of social grace.

x. And it's a failing which can't be reclaimed;
There are no substitutes for those small things:
The right word, understanding turns of phrase,
Consideration, and a social bond.

xi. Regardless it is clear I am at odds
With occupational desire to mix
And socialise (be that artificial)
And I'm unable, not for want of will.

xii. Whatever else goes on in days of work
It's social grace that oils the piston beam:
For those than can, ingratiating perk,
For those that can't, impossible pipe dream.

xiii. When dealing with employment, now as then,
To be on time is work's prerequisite:
Your day begins and at a given hour:
And then, not at another time, you start.

xiv. I will not say this is an easy task
But most can manage well with this demand,
And they successfully arrive at work
And at the time that's mutually agreed.

xv. I find this hard, pathetic tired excuse
Is day on day I can't get out of bed,
And even on the flimsiest of grounds
I'll choose my rest above the waking world.

xvi. This need may wane with my infirmity,
Thus when I'm ill I need three hours a night,
But when I'm well my natural need for sleep
Precludes some everyday activities.

xvii. And my alarm will sound and bid me rise,
I feel the overwhelming urge to sleep,
And take ten minutes more which grow to hours
And if I rise I live a world of dread.

xviii. I think the causal factor in my sleep
Is side effects of pills that I'm prescribed;
It's hard to say, I've rarely been without,
But such a lethargy must have some grounds.

xix. I need to sleep eleven hours a night,
A little more and I would hibernate,
Each night I need eleven hours of sleep
And given chance I'd even sleep the more.

xx. The pattern is beyond an indolence,
I feel deprived on less than what I take,
The pattern must be more than lethargy,
But miss an hour one night, it needs reclaimed.

xxi. So it is sloth, to give the thing a name,
It has no cure and it is me at fault;
Or could it be those tablets that I take
With lists of side effects that make you spin.

xxii. And hell! it makes no difference either way,
This is an actuality of life
A painful one from which I can't escape,
And side effect or no, I suffer sloth.

xxiii. And so I'm slothful, it's a mark I bear,
And it is one of seven deadly sins,
By God I would exchange the wretched thing
For many chosen venialities.

xxiv. To keep bad time, a self fulfilling curse,
The fact is seen whatever you attempt;
To watch the clock is poor, but one step worse,
To disregard the thing and breed contempt.

xxv. And team work is a necessary skill;
In my experience of office life
A project needs the nous of more than one
To gain fruition, growing stage by stage.
xxvi. A single person's skill set's not enough
To see multifaceted goals and aims
Traverse the path from drawing board designs
To tried and tested actuality.
xxvii. To work in harmony with other's needs,
To give a point of view where it's required,
To hear constructive words about progress,
Such distillate creates a unison.
xxviii. To share on common themes about what's known,
To criticise whilst aiming to improve,
To take suggestions with the good that's meant,
This paves the way to productivity.
xxix. But what's desired is not always in place,
And in my limited experience
The build of teams is hierarchical
And on this basis places must be earned.
xxx. That's well and good for those who win a place
But what of those who fail to graduate?
The hierarchy's state almost requires,
Insists, that some are in and some are out.
xxxi. As analysed it's like the rest of life,
Another clique to tilt your lance against,
And it is fair to say that in this case,
You will not beat them, best to try to join.
xxxii. And being one outside the clique of teams
It seems to me the world of work would work
With greater productivity and gain
Through introducing some equality.
xxxiii. And as I say this it is plain to see
The man without, requesting things be shared;
This is a plea that has been made before,
And one that's preached but seldom acted on.
xxxiv. That leaves me where I started: I'm outside;
And better off to know and work with this
Than ideate on schemes and means and ways
To make my humble projects gain import.
xxxv. That said, I should be thankful for my role
And that I share an office, have a desk,
It is a valued opportunity
Which for the likes of me is hard to gain.
xxxvi. Some empathise with others, friendly state,
And form a partnership on diverse grounds,
But if you're not the kind to integrate
Then team work is a skill that's out of bounds.

xxxvii. Reflecting on the places where I've worked
There were private as well as public aims,
A mix of what is said, and what's unsaid,
What's written down and what is in the mind.
xxxviii. And plans that half exist have equal weight
To actualities of working life,
Importantly objectives float and flit,
Appear gay motes which people the sun beams.
xxxix. And there would seem to be two modes of work,
Subjective and objective side by side:
To grasp the latter doesn't give egress
Into the former's all important world.
xl. I've said that these aspects live side by side
But in the actual world one rules, one serves,
Subjective factors sway objective ones,
It's not the task, it's who it's chosen for.
xli. And thus there is a realm of people's aims
Access to which remains a gift to some
And as you operate in this rare sphere
You find much more is meant than you are told.
xlii. You find the things that influence your role
Decided, and before you've had your say,
The future's set for you without your voice,
You're there to do as you're instructed to.
xliii. My skills are poor in this subjective world,
Where roles and job descriptions are discussed,
Although the simple diagnosis stands
That I'm a pawn without the chance to queen.
xliv. My scarce abilities expendable,
And seen as fit for opening sacrifice,
No more, no less than offering play's gambit:
The humble pawn or office junior.
xlv. I've observed others manage such a role
To their advantage, gain themselves respect:
There's many differences which mark me off,
One strikes: I can't ingratiate myself.
xlvi. And thus with me as most in office work
My modes of action stay as circumscribed
Until the day they're changed to something else,
And then until I'm used to it, I've change.
xlvii. To me it would appear in what I do,
It was my choice to choose, and though I'd like
More choice (as everyone) it stays the case
That some decisions will be made for me.
xlviii. There are some channels through which needs are met
Such channels seem to hold promise in store,
But policy's tacit roll call is set
By conversations in the corridor.

xlix. And were the world rewarded having tried
The simple fact would revolutionise
The lacklustre fortunes of countless souls,
Transforming inability to skill.

l. Alas, the ways of world are not as this
And when it comes to work we speak results,
And tears and sweat and blood are secondary,
And only count beside objectives won.

li. There is dichotomy of one and all,
So too dichotomy of work and ends,
And keenly felt by those who try but fail,
By those who try yet never gain their aim.

lii. The whole revolves around expected goals
And thus can be subjective past compare,
Objectives may remain unspecified
And if achieved become requirements met.

liii. And I am one of those that misapply
And thus I fail to gain desired results,
It seems to me I do the task required
Although the aim of it evades my grasp.

liv. And I devote myself to what's to do
And I'll spend days and months engrossed in work,
I'll read and think and write and search my brains,
Present at academic conferences.

lv. And when the sweat on brow is wiped away
I look around at all I've said and done
And hoping to identify progress
I see I haven't moved from where I was.

lvi. And thus my lack of gain exasperates,
And it is clear I haven't reached a goal,
As clear to others that I'm where I stood,
This is stagnation through a pile of work.

lvii. And having said that it is fair to say
I've often made my way down own dead ends:
Although the fault is mine when this occurs
The lack of end result is much the same.

lviii. I'll see a fault in something that I've done,
Ignore the time that's needed for repair,
And set myself the task perfecting it
Despite the fact there's better things to do.

lix. With this and many more there is mismatch
Between effort and wanted end results,
I'll say I envy those that make these meet
Such union ably turns the wheels of work.

lx. The aim is clear but it is hard to read
The destination of activity,
And application doesn't always lead
To what is sought: a productivity.

lxi. To speak of work's responsibilities,
A varied mix of thoughts pervades the mind;
The chance to grasp and turn into success,
Or to avoid, and stick with what is known.

lxii. Were I to take the former attitude
My stance would resonate with other views,
My love of London (still three Books from now),
And small solace that solipsism brings.

lxiii. In times of fortune these are similar,
And each a self-fulfilling prophecy,
Responsibilities, if liked and met,
Will automatically improve milieu.

lxiv. Who is there, would not wish for betterment,
The chance to shine, and ably prove themselves,
The chance to be distinguished from the crowd,
The chance to win some accolade or praise.

lxv. But with the chance to rise comes chance to fall;
And thus if aims exceed abilities
You find yourself in vain attempting tasks
Which are beyond your actual competence.

lxvi. No type of work disheartens more than this,
None makes for lower productivity,
The deep despondency of setting goals
That cannot be attained, despite the will.

lxvii. The other word that names this state of play:
Incompetence; and this a brand that burns,
Regardless whether not enough was known
Or whether more than could be asked was asked.

lxviii. And it's a curse to be requested to
Perform a task that is beyond your ken,
And I have taken work where this applies,
With other stress this cost my sanity.

lxix. I like my roles without the condiments,
For me the bread is fair enough alone,
And in my mix I lack ambition's touch
Which makes me shun responsibilities.

lxx. When I consider former states I've known
This strikes me as a shame, but I have lost
Ability and so too competence;
My sights are set on things regarded low.

lxxi. Perhaps with time this view of work will change,
The first requirement, gaining expertise,
And it is fair to say I lack a trade,
This needs altered to gain ambition's drive.

lxxii. And some receive responsibility
And take the compliment the way it's meant,
However others lack ability
And find a gift that taxes earthbound bent.

lxxiii. And there are ties and bonds to form at work,
There is a social structure that's in place,
And though it's not the kind you'd swap for home,
It is a pond in which you find you swim.

lxxiv. And when your days are taken up by it
This goldfish bowl takes on reality
And what is said and who is friends with who
Becomes important, more so than you'd wish.

lxxv. And sleep is lost through trivialities,
A smile becomes a weapon in a war,
The casual word will load itself with weight,
And worlds are built on what remains unsaid.

lxxvi. These are the things that make for office life,
And woe betide the man who falling foul
Of hierarchies stretching high and low
Has thoughts of just remaining unnoticed.

lxxvii. To hover in the sidelines takes a craft
Unknown to most, a skill and subtle art
So fine that those who can might just as well
And easily be playing leading roles.

lxxviii. And in this somewhat closed environment
I find myself, as if by osmosis,
Like salt that draws the water from the slug,
There on the fringe, I feed on other's grace.

lxxix. I fail to make the effort to engage,
And as elsewhere I lack a social grace,
And when it comes to making talk or chat
The onus falls on others, I'm inept.

lxxx. And so there seems to be society,
Which on a host of levels, lets me in,
But where I feel I cannot gain a hold;
I guess a form of insecurity.

lxxxi. Perhaps I've grounds for insecurity
And on the other hand, perhaps I've not,
But it is something that is keenly felt,
And thus it's not a thing to be ignored.

lxxxii. To give a thing a name can cure or ail,
Less stigma goes with 'insecurity',
Perhaps to realise and know the ill
May go some way in way of treating it.

lxxxiii. And were our ills divided into two,
Incurable and so too curable,
This ill would fall into the latter's realm;
Praise be to God, a veniality.

lxxxiv. For failings, work's friendship won't make amends,
You may discover little enmities,
So if you fail the task of making friends
Just thank your luck you've made no enemies.

lxxxv. And trying for a competent approach
Towards her work's objectives, grand or small,
The line dividing failure and success
Must be the straight ability to plan.

lxxxvi. And those who court success, that fickle maid,
Have seen her every need, foreseen her wants,
Allowed for each eventuality,
And thus could turn disaster into gain.

lxxxvii. And they have planned for outcomes fair and foul,
And there is always something in reserve,
A fact or piece of knowledge they have gleaned,
The kind that lightens any dull report.

lxxxviii. And with success, they fill a varied role,
And always have excuse to be behind,
Because on countless other projects worked
Through application they're ahead of time.

lxxxix. To be as one of these, oh that I were,
Though it's the same to wish for untold wealth,
Both this and that a kind of fantasy
I'd leave alone for those with active minds.

xc. I do not play the lottery (as yet)
And with the same intentions I'll not rise
To thinking thoughts of how my world might change
Were I to be successful in my plans.

xci. And if I thought as such, I might as well
Start dreaming dreams of roles in Hollywood:
I'm one aware of my realities,
And thus I focus most on what's concrete.

xcii. Despite my realism, I can't plan,
And thus attempts to study, which is work,
Have gone astray, with efforts turned futile,
Most through directionless activity.

xciii. And it is me to blame for most of this,
And now through my mistakes I am aware
(Or maybe not the same, I think I am)
Of how to make a start in my research.

xciv. And at the last attempt through lacking plans,
I took a firm direction from above,
And when returning to this best advice
I found I'd set myself ten years of work.

xcv. And these the plans that I'd inherited
Required ambition over and above
The circumscribed ability of most:
Such plans exceeded any competence.

xcvi. Regardless what you find you're working on
It pays to make a plan and cover doubt,
To take your plans from higher echelon
Is lesser evil than to go without.

xcvii. And then the opposite of work in teams,
There comes a time, if it's not straight away,
That work is taken independently;
A project or a scheme entrusted sole.
xcviii. This could be deemed responsibility
But in another way of seeing things
This is an affirmation of the role:
Natural progression, not a forward leap.
xcix. And so to take responsibility
Is taking charge of roles or staff or work
Whereas to work alone is just to be
Responsible for self and what self does.
c. The chance of standing on your own two feet,
The chance of proving certain aptitudes,
And those who take this role, in some senses,
Though not in all, will answer to themselves.
ci. And well and good to those who thrive with this,
Who rising to the challenge as it's meant
Go on to show a strength of will and mind
To overcome whatever obstacles.
cii. These are the sort of people get things done,
And find promotion for ability,
And act, and say the thing that needs be said,
The kind of people that are listened to.
ciii. I'm not such leading light, nor was this meant,
I am a minor actor, one that does
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Perhaps advise (not prompt) the foremost role.
civ. Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
With high intentions, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous -
And seldom meaning it, but seen the fool.
cv. This could be viewed as mediocrity,
And at my age such traits come home to roost;
My brains - no longer to employer's gain,
But being bright is not an option now.
cvi. And this of many failings which I have,
This one is difficult to reconcile:
There is no chance or means to alter it,
And my poor state will worsen year on year.
cvii. And as it taxes me in fields I lack
I'd rather work my hours collectively;
If choice were mine I would not take the risk
Where I rely on my unstable self.
cviii. And if you find you're working on your own
A self-reliance is obligatory,
There's more than me are shy to work alone
And find it harsh when I replaces we.

cix. And strong relationships fall into place,
And on the back of working overlap,
With similarities incentivised,
Becoming reasons to collaborate.

cx. And others talk of others' praised efforts,
As work and thoughts are shared between colleagues,
In search of new ideas and fresh angles,
Communication serves its double role.

cxi. And thus I've teamed with others in research,
United efforts furthered all of us,
Collaborators each one helping each,
With firm results and published article.

cxii. There's some will ask for help and some will give,
And some will do a part of given task,
Whilst someone else completes and complements:
And hence the term research community.

cxiii. And this community, the same as all,
Is in possession of a social face,
And as you've seen me time and time again,
I trip, presented with the social sphere.

cxiv. In its essence, I know the fault is mine,
But I am powerless in so many ways
To mend the fault or start to integrate
In such a way to end incompetence.

cxv. I shy presented with the social side,
And resolute asocial tendencies
But harm my cause: and seen from one aspect
I'm not inquisitive and hence don't know.

cxvi. And seen another way (this makes a pair)
I don't express myself to anyone,
And hence my thoughts and plans remain my own,
And thus to others, strange my quantity.

cxvii. And where I study, that is where I work,
I must be fair that firstly fault is mine,
In spite of this, society is mixed
In ways of which I am received by it.

cxviii. So there you find there is a spectrum's breadth,
Ignoring choice of red or blue or green,
For each one that presents, the match is there;
Not quite a rainbow, more a range of hues.

cxix. With work's facets measured in many spheres,
Each overlapping with the other ones,
To have a deficit as stark as mine
Is bound to have a further consequence.

cxx. Despite academic abilities,
Some fitness is assigned with other goals -
It is the tea break's social niceties
Cements the in's and out's of working roles.

cxxi. And if the baton is not passed from high,
And if the fire in other's eyes won't catch,
And if it's not instilled and from above,
And if illumination won't descend.
cxxii. And if the team is stark monotony,
And if colleagues appear a shade of grey,
And if it seems that to communicate
Does lack the spark that furnishes ideas.
cxxiii. Then you will have to kindle fire yourself,
And find desire to persevere with work;
Then you will have to light and fan the flames
Which can initiate a working will.
cxxiv. I speak of motivation, and the art
Of finding reason to perform a task,
Ignoring that before this may have been
The kind of task that's found opprobrious.
cxxv. And motivation comes in shapes and forms:
A love of money or a love of praise,
A drive for betterment, a love of work,
Desire for status, or a will to please.
cxxvi. Whatever varied reasons that there are
The end result shines through the one and same:
A will to work, and with that will to work
And better understanding of the 'Why?'
cxxvii. And those who've learnt or gained or won this will
Are in possession of advantages
Eclipsing those attained in other spheres,
And making those without appear inept.
cxxviii. To work at work and have a will for work,
What better attribute could you present
To fill a vacancy, to gain employ:
'She's motivated', and the job is hers.
cxxix. And here I fail in motivation's aims,
In work I'm only fit to pin my hopes
On those concrete objectives (which are few)
Allowing absolutes for measurement.
cxxx. And thus at times I'll find the will to work
On certain schemes, and those which fit this theme,
But in the everyday I lack the will,
And find I ebb without a certain goal.
cxxxi. To work is easier when there's a will,
And simply said the other way around,
Same task is many times the worse without;
So thank this will for all that it can grant.
cxxxii. There's daily grounds for occupation's stings,
Most soothed with single much desired essence:
It's motivation high above all things
Which shades and colours work's experience.

cxxxiii. And if you work in an established field
There is some knowledge which is common ground,
A fixed corpus, not just valid today,
A thing you can rely on over time.
cxxxiv. Another way to say the same would be
That normal fields of study uncover
Some books containing well received ideas,
With each aspect, from each angle, discussed.
cxxxv. Defined and through single word - consensus -
You'll find agreement in most disciplines,
With certain views that stand above the rest,
Some things are known to be, are not mere thoughts.
cxxxvi. And in my study, which is in my work,
There is a double reason I don't sit
In one or other neat established field,
And why demands of knowledge widen far.
cxxxvii. And first I'm in a developing field,
And what is known and trumpeted by one,
May be discounted as a fickle thought
By any other author and ignored.
cxxxviii. And secondly, although emergent field,
I try my hand in area's I.T.,
And with computers, task, to stay abreast
Of current knowledge, is perforce a race.
cxxxix. So on one hand a lacking consensus;
The branch of knowledge is so new in growth
That standards and established modes of thought
Have yet to populate the central strands.
cxl. And then to try to stay in touch with web
Technology, software and with hardware
That seems to change its colour day by day,
The web as worked is true chameleon.
cxli. It is a task just keeping up to date,
A half hearted attempt won't cut the ice,
The state is all or nothing, now or past,
And none will build projects on last year's code.
cxlii. And so I look for functionality
That doesn't fade, timeless technology,
And what I find is past the sell-by date,
A staid simplicity that can't perform.
cxliii. And though I know the basics should combine
To form the complex applications sought,
It needs the most recent release of code,
The now almost requires a novelty.
cxliv. And working with technologies which move,
Your knowledge has no simple status quo,
Acquaintance with the cutting edge you'll prove,
Or else you're hopelessly not in the know.

BOOK V – INGRAINED ATTITUDES

i. I do not know if they are attitudes
Or if indeed they are, if they're ingrained,
They might just be a form of prejudice,
Or false assumptions, those to which I jump.

ii. They may not have a name, but they exist,
And are the kinds of thoughts I'm drawn towards
When it were best to show uncertainty:
It's these, my first impressions guide me wrong.

iii. Although they seem to be quite innocent
These thoughts and attitudes can lead astray:
And thus I will confound the false for real
And take exuberance for beauty too.

iv. With this mistaken filter, view of life
It seems I sail a sea of platitudes,
Or make assumptions seeing only good
Assuming superficialities:

v. Assuming (fatal flaw of teenage years)
That all around would want to be a friend
And that the only obstacle to that
Is explanation of what's similar.

vi. These attitudes reveal themselves ingrained
When situations just repeat themselves
And nonetheless reaction stays the same
Despite the fact of failure first time round.

vii. I have relied ten times on failed advice
And even when it emanated from
The self same mouth, when slightest sense suggests
Discounting such a source a useless one.

viii. I ask myself why I'm so credulous:
I guess, through first impressions such as these,
These attitudes ingrained and etched in stone,
This prejudice of marked simplicity.

ix. Although this set of detrimental thoughts
Might be described as straight naiveties
In several cases they are worse than that
And change to take the form of prejudice.

x. Assigning people to a sliding scale
In social hierarchy built for snobs
I plain forget that were I judged the same
I'd fall as far below as think I rise.

xi. These first impressions, these simplicities,
I'd not reject outright, throw overboard,
But for the simple fact they guide me wrong
And lead my mind to many cul-de-sacs.

xii. Although this is a fairly common fault
What's not is that I fall between two camps
(The one or other most will occupy)
Which leaves me isolated, thinking 'Why?'

xiii. The first camp (one to which I have belonged)
Of two of which I find I fall between
Is that where attitudes are unconscious
And left to roam as freely as they wish.
xiv. And as I state, at times I've known this state:
Was sure that I controlled my attitudes
Although they ruled the roost I claimed was mine
(The contradictions buoyed by lack of thought).
xv. To know this mode akin to ship at sea
That sails unaided and unharmed through mines
Although it never knew that they were there
And ignorant of danger just proceeds.
xvi. And so my prejudice was bane to me
But I was blind to see the caused offence
And navigated blind through dire straits
As if they were the calms in harbour walls.
xvii. The most important part of states like this
Is that placid unconsciousness of self
Associated with the child and youth
And isolated archetypes of class.
xviii. And this precludes dull circumspection's ways
From interfering much with attitudes,
Permits a freedom which is best restrained:
The loose unbridled rule of prejudice.
xix. Although there's many think they've left this camp
There's quite a few remaining in it still
Despite the march of years, maturity,
Despite experience and living life.
xx. And I have forced myself to leave this camp
Not liking attitudes and prejudice
I notice in my constituted self,
Such prejudice I wish that I could change.
xxi. And though I say I forced myself to leave
In fact I was ejected (lacking grace)
By that opprobrium that turned on me
Because my prejudice was rank and sore.
xxii. I can no longer dwell in innocence
With this unconscious youth's naivety:
My past offence of prejudice so great
I crave reflection (hoping that can right).
xxiii. With this foremost in mind and glancing back
I walk towards the second camp of two
And hope I'm introduced to safety there
Amongst a different kind of attitude.
xxiv. When all about the former camp is said
It is a rite of passage leaving it
I should have moved onward in teenage years
And trying now (retarded) raises fears.

xxv. And so that second camp (that I don't know)
Of two of which I find I fall between
Is that where attitudes are fruit of thought
And are controlled by circumspection's reign.
xxvi. There each is master of their prejudice
And has examined it for good and bad
Knows what needs jettisoned as waste of space
And has discovered what aspects should stay.
xxvii. The most of those who occupy this camp
Are conscious of their faults, so too their good,
And through this knowledge can improve themselves
And know to make a better out of worse.
xxviii. Reflection is the key that I've not learnt:
I practice this in verse, and thus I hope
That there will be some overflow to catch
In everyday and make me change my ways.
xxix. And so the state that is unconscious bliss,
(I was ejected from this state because
My bliss cost other's ease and caused offence)
The step beyond this bliss is knowing self.
xxx. And that is where I fall between two camps
Because I find it hard to introspect,
And though in recent years I have advanced
It seems I am a stranger to myself.
xxxi. And thus I know my prejudice enough
That it offends both others and myself:
At times I find I hear harsh words from me
As if they came from someone else's mouth.
xxxii. But still I cannot close the feedback loop,
I cannot change the prejudice I loathe,
And I berate myself as others do
But cannot modify my failing ways.
xxxiii. Concerning attitudes (of which I spoke)
It stands that I'm repulsed by some of mine
But haven't won the strength of mind and will
To change these ways of thought for better ones.
xxxiv. I am between two bases (vulnerable)
And must evolve to gain the further base:
I hope that this will come with time and work,
I see no other way to win what's sought.
xxxv. My problems might be styled an ignorance
And with that education might well help,
But rather it's experience I need
Of learning how to think before I speak.
xxxvi. The skills I lack would seem but basic ones
And I'm in awe I've lived this far without:
I have tried hard and start to see green shoots
And for my ways of thought I need firm roots.

xxxvii. And if I question how it's come about,
The very attitudes that I don't like
Have found themselves ingrained so strong in me,
Then television surely plays a role.

xxxviii. And each familiar programme paints the world
A commonplace, one which we take as read
When viewing any genre which we chose,
Or any slice of time from those on show.

xxxix. The dominance of commonplace will change
With time (and genre - though beyond our scope)
And what was 'understood' ten years ago
Has been replaced with what's 'accepted' now.

xl. And there are 'revolutions' in the way
The audience will 'comprehend' something,
A different presentation giving weight
To paid production's stark novel angle.

xli. And attitudes become some measurement,
Or it would seem almost evolved to that:
With someone's age not weighed in days or years
But attitudes that correspond to shows.

xlii. A person's hair cut may be in or out,
The fashions come and go, are cyclical,
But attitudes towards monogamy
Progress in places, may delineate.

xliii. Amount of television watched per day?
(I would not be the one to estimate)
However much, the time is formative
And moulds impressions and our attitudes.

xliv. There may be some suspend their disbelief,
Assimilate the programmes critically,
But even self control perfected pure
Must subconsciously absorb some bias.

xlv. Perhaps the few exist, but it remains
The case that for the vast majority
TV impinges on a way of life,
The medium is the message - plainly said.

xlvi. And when it comes to me and what I glean,
Impressions are the message, attitudes,
And views of things are those that I absorb
And taken from a 2-D screen, not life.

xlvii. And in this way I openly invite
A stranger into part of what is me:
I sit transfixed and watch their views and thoughts
And through a medium where I can't reply.

xlviii. Not meant as some surprise - I do not watch,
I do not own or view or want TV:
And do I speak with too much vitriol,
Perhaps the case that I'm susceptible.

xlix. If I reflect this set of attitudes,
And ape the television's state of play,
Then to which age does prejudice belong,
And my impressions, what years mark their birth?

l. The times describe an era (well, to me):
I'm not completely sure of their onset,
But can pinpoint the end with certainty
And if I needed I could name the day.

li. 1964 fresh-faced Bob Dylan
Played Philharmonic Hall - my era ends,
Another starts, with better not since seen,
That bloomed and flowered graciously a time.

lii. I claim I'm influenced by dross TV
And yet I note a passing folk concert:
Although, they merge, and latter plays a role,
And marks ascension of a growing force.

liii. My minds own televisual genesis
Precedes this cultural Rubicon, knew pap
That was produced before in quantity,
Whose attitudes should shame those ones who made.

liv. A dunce I imitate what's seen on screen:
And when I speak of attitudes like these,
I speak of first impressions and of thoughts
That flit across my mind yet aren't expressed.

lv. And thus my thoughts of family and home!
Such basic thoughts opposed to what I do,
To others' managed actuality,
And last not least to ethos of the age.

lvi. And dread stereotypes which grasp my mind
Disturbing my objecting intellect:
E.g. the measure of a wife's success
Is her appearance - Help! the thought is wild.

lvii. The way I place the husband in the home!
My prejudice has pipes and slippers brought
Across the land, when life's reality
Advanced beyond this stage an age ago.

lviii. And then the place of children in the world!
I'll think they're there to make a smart remark,
To joke of age of which they're ignorant;
What platitude, denying youth their right!

lix. As I have said these attitudes will flit,
They are opposed by intellect which proves
That useless, idle fantasy like this
Can't join with anyone's reality.

lx. But still my first impressions hinder me
And I would like to learn to exorcise
That which I see as some leftover food
From meal which first time round was over stewed.

lxi. It strikes me odd (as it should strike you too)
That my influential decade pre-dates
The time that I was brought into the world:
I was not born when its TV was made.

lxii. And yet it seems to me without a doubt
My open mind has acted part of sponge
And mopped the water that is attitude
From source which even then was hard to find.

lxiii. Maybe there are some other reasons too:
As if 1960's sit-com possessed
The power to captivate the watching mind
The more would be like me, which they are not.

lxiv. Perhaps the subject matter resonates
With something reassuring in my mind:
Is there a font of staid stereotype
To which my psyche then and now responds?

lxv. And matching attitudes to those school books
Which on instruction knew attention's span
And painted life decades, more, out of date -
These fit with those as bits of one jigsaw.

lxvi. If Jane and John's agenda were my life
Without complexity of any kind
It's fair to say I'd find myself content
In ways in which reality denies.

lxvii. Maybe it is that straight simplicity
(Which hides the issue that it simplifies)
That heady sense that one and one is two
And all of life with ease can be reduced.

lxviii. Could be the artificial happiness
I took as real, I thought it reproduced
Through imitation of their attitudes
And through repeating modes of work and play.

lxix. Perhaps influence of my parents roles
(Their understanding of the world at large)
Communicated me as if from source
The dross spirit of black and white TV.

lxx. This might make sense with actual facts ignored:
Truth - were my parents put in pigeon-holes,
Back then they'd be described alternative,
Distinct from those stereotypes of shows.

lxxi. My thoughts on this remain ambivalent:
The source I'd see as an unusual one
If these influences decades apart
Have formed and moulded roles of youth and more.

lxxii. And on the other hand the theory fits:
My attitudes did not give birth to selves
But must arise encouraged by something -
I ape, as birds will copy when they sing.

lxxiii. Beside this cursèd surfeit of prejudice
A corresponding inability
To be at home (or be at ease away)
With sexual attitudes, relationships.

lxxiv. It's not surprising that a social lack
Should have a conjoined twin in other field:
Abilities and too their opposites
Come paired in natures hand as dealt to all.

lxxv. I guess the course of lust did ne'er run smooth
(And then what we today expect, true lust):
With choice, I'd be an artist's figurine
Devoid of any genitalia.

lxxvi. Mine is the case of failed experiment
And every time I've tried and not done well
The fault must lie with me and nowhere else:
Hence marriages weren't saved from lunacy.

lxxvii. With women I attempt to reify
The personality which gives them grace,
This just another way of turning them
To objects of the glossy printed page.

lxxviii. Through this I crave a dull automaton,
And with my efforts this is what I get:
I fail to see the living spark of dreams,
And fail to please, not even part aware.

lxxix. The other way - were I objectified,
Reduced to set details upon a page,
(Those which prospective partners chose to view)
I'd surely be the worst suggestion known.

lxxx. And were I picked for some relationship
(My grace resulting from subjective traits)
I could not help but judge objectively:
This may explain why I'm a single man.

lxxxi. So then it comes to why they married me;
It is the case that since they have seen sense
But at three points three women thought it wise
(In turn) to tie their lives to mine in law.

lxxxii. And when I think about the past that was
And all the facts surrounding marriages
There is but one conclusion to be drawn:
One, then another, must have pitied me.

lxxxiii. But irrespective I've a deficit:
And thus in ways I've tried to illustrate
My attitudes to women that I love
Do not belong to this millennium.

lxxxiv. And it's the same as prejudice described:
I'd like to alter it, but don't know how,
It is emotional (or seems to be),
Which I can't change in my naivety.

lxxxv. And when I look around at those I know
I see them making progress in their way,
They mould relationships to function well,
Whilst I have stalled despite my best attempts.

lxxxvi. And now's the stage where people settle down
And friends and siblings manage with success,
They grow - how would I build on my past form?
Include divorce as part of marriage vows?

lxxxvii. In truth the matter is beyond a joke,
And those unlucky to have married me
Would fail to see a comedy described,
And might detect a tragedy instead.

lxxxviii. I will accentuate a point I made,
And thus repeat my verse (a little changed),
From stanza twelve of Book II, where I wrote
(What I will say again for emphasis):

lxxxix. *Were I, as I am now, present thus twice*
At my own conjugal exchange of vows
I would object and halt proceedings there,
With view to saving all from selves and me.

xc. This wish may come from lack of touch and feel,
My inability to empathise;
My prejudice that makes the words come true -
Difference outweighs the similarity.

xci. As my perceptions will prevent a love,
All chances with my opposites in sex
Preclude development of partnership,
That and I see myself unfit for task.

xcii. And put another way (from Groucho Marx):
I'd straight away refuse to join the club
That would have me a member through its doors:
He jests, I'm earnest through experience.

xciii. And it depresses as would woe on woe
That I've regressed whilst others have progressed:
And through decades I've taken strides backwards,
Perhaps decline of age, but others rise ...

xciv. Ignoring any made comparison
To others and supposed achievements made,
My lacking want of these abilities
Irrespective, alone, upbraids myself.

xcv. I've said that faults will often come in twos:
The same I've yet to say on family
Can too be said on unions that I forge:
Square pegs, round holes, there is anomaly.

xcvi. I know my first impressions let me down
And attitudes were best if they were changed,
That said, such thoughts may represent surplus:
Square pegs, round holes - so why pursue purpose?

xcvii. And if the case presents so poor as this
What prognosis for future partnership?
Sometimes the strangest souls will find their mate
And know requited love, then why not me?
xcviii. Perhaps I view myself the worst of bad,
Maybe I'm not as dire as I assume?
Is state of play so firm against me now,
Must I admit defeat before half time?
xcix. And if I've known the seeds of love before
Next time they could bear forth productively?
On-line, the dating is a numbers game
Perhaps I need but try some to succeed?
c. I know I've tried and failed and more than once,
But does that mean I'm bound to fail again?
Although I think that I'm unfit for task,
I'm not an old dog yet, why can't I learn?
ci. I'd claim these questions are rhetorical,
My answers to them all are negative:
It makes no sense attempting unison
When I'd be better off as celibate.
cii. This dialogue of me (that means of one)
Would indicate that not just common sense
Suggests I cease to search for Mrs. Right
And should decline to court the fairer sex.
ciii. Reason and sense and Hobson's choice converge:
As one who's failed in formed relationships
It makes no sense initiating more,
The time has come to say I'm on my own.
civ. And so through sense in choice, and lack of choice
It seems my choice is to be celibate,
And though I'm not the envy of the crowd
I'm better off than were I wed to strife.
cv. Some celibate have turned the energy
To other tasks, been able to transform
That driving force to further other aims:
I do not know if I can claim I'm thus.
cvi. Perhaps I'd claim my verse is better now,
And even if that's so, that does not prove
There is a link between my written work
And fact that now I lack a partner's kiss.
cvii. I would not wish this choice on innocents,
And yet I feel it is the choice for me;
It stands: where once there was, is now a void:
Sometimes of nothingness have come good things.
cviii. Reality approaches with a frown:
I know a disability, for sure,
Perhaps this here's an inability.
Do two seams merge into deficiency?

cix. Returning to my first impressions felt,
Or maybe attitudes, or prejudice:
They need a name so they can be described
And pointed to as something that's distinct.

cx. In my description I've not used the word:
These things are feelings, I'm almost certain;
And so these feelings, they just run amok,
And choose to make a mess of reasoned life.

cxi. It is the female sex that better knows
Manipulates and is familiar with
Her own and other's feelings - as a man
No wonder then I have a slender grasp.

cxii. I have proclivity in that I'm blessed
With feelings taking many shapes and forms,
But fail the grade, because I cannot start
To deal with them in ways the novice can.

cxiii. But lets be clear on definitions now:
It's not a kind or type of attitude,
Because it doesn't dovetail with belief,
If attitude there'd be some overlap.

cxiv. It's not a first impression of something,
That still would base itself on reason or
Experience, and then there wouldn't be
This constant disagreement with the self.

cxv. I cannot grant that it's a prejudice
And that because it isn't preconceived,
There is naivety in what occurs,
This, not a part of biased sentiment.

cxvi. My feelings show themselves in diverse range,
Sometimes so much that I am overwhelmed,
Each situation truly seeming new
Gives rise to novel feelings, obstacles.

cxvii. These feelings guide me and they guide me wrong,
They turn my thoughts to things irrelevant,
They mould my mood, and make discomfort rife,
And turn me into one incapable.

cxviii. I have and know these feelings night and day,
Not only that but I am sensitive,
And agonise projecting things I feel,
The putative turns to reality.

cxix. Perhaps I need to learn how to express,
Perhaps that's what I do in writing verse;
But where I stand? I hold myself hostage
Without a clear demand to gain release.

cxx. I'm sure that it is feelings worry me,
Reduced to cliché - I am not in touch:
I've struggled hard with dread psychiatry
I've had no time for plain psychology.

cxxi. These disconcerting feelings that I know
Go hand in hand with tinted views of self,
Perhaps these 'views' are just another name
For types of feelings I attach to me.

cxxii. And to be fair, my feelings of myself
Arise from misconceptions that I have,
Through friction of the real and fictional,
My mind ignoring what's reality.

cxxiii. Progenitor of feelings that disturb
Are self-impressions, almost more than false:
They are fictitious, they're a lie made up,
They seem invented like a comic book.

cxxiv. My tale, a hotchpotch of experience,
I take the parts I think will serve me well,
Pretending these exemplify myself,
And think that I'm possessed of what I'm not.

cxxv. I'll give example of this tendency:
At school I tried, was smart, the teachers pet -
I'll think I still possess this aptitude
And am surprised when tripe I spout's dismissed.

cxxvi. Said differently, I think I don't decline,
And thus if it's the case I've climbed a peak
Or gained ability in years gone by,
I will deceive myself that still I can.

cxxvii. Perhaps this would not matter quite so much
Were not decline so integral to me,
In youth I knew a fine ability,
It doesn't help pretending it's still there.

cxxviii. Discussing intellectual competence,
(And manner it will wax and wane through life)
Perhaps well to have never shone at all
Than to have shone, then lost your shine, and know.

cxxix. This, my inflated view of self, degrades,
And it is like the feelings I've discussed:
Emotional - and that's the type of thing
Escapes the subtleties of my control.

cxxx. My own impressions of my self are false:
With such a starting point there's no surprise
That interaction with reality
Results in contradictions, left and right.

cxxxi. I think I'm not a slave, but yet I am,
And try to walk to town and am surprised
By chains my mind has made, I raise a laugh
Authoring bondage, thinking that I'm free.

cxxxii. The body's aged decline is harsh, but mind's!
My view of self is complicated much:
I've been able, and somehow like my name
I feel this shouldn't change but stay the same.

cxxxiii. And when I wrote the prologue months ago
I aired the view I'd like to shelf what's felt:
Is this ambitious plan realistic?
Or on examination, does it fail?

cxxxiv. How should I try to shelf my thoughts of self
And first impressions and my attitudes?
Would this not be a wealth of things repressed
Whose pressure needs must find a vent elsewhere?

cxxxv. What should I do if something's sight offends?
Is fair response to poke out both my eyes?
Perhaps my feelings spring forth from my heart
And try to tell me something I should hear.

cxxxvi. My share is lacking harmony of soul:
My broadcast of discordant messages
Which I myself receive (without a pause)
Must know some origin in paucity.

cxxxvii. I feel and know internalised discord:
And at this time of relative good health
When needs are met, and standing on my feet,
Difficulties arise from me myself.

cxxxviii. Subjective moods play havoc with my days,
Phenomena objectively the same
As felt will differ more than markedly
Depending on the mood I find I'm in.

cxxxix. Whole periods of time are ruled like this,
And be they good or bad, they know no link,
Or seem to lack a link (which is the same)
To those objective facts you'd think would count.

cxl. And to ignore these feelings asks too much
And that in terms of this and that repressed:
This tack has been my strategy in life
And could well be the grounds for many ills.

cxli. My feelings seem untamed compared to some
(Surprise in place of social niceties)
But they should not be jettisoned for this,
Befriending them can only benefit.

cxlii. It's clear I need familiarise myself
With that which troubles me - this swathe of moods -
And gain a knowledge of what makes me tick,
Applying learning, aiming to improve.

cxliii. Last line, last word, contextually suggests
This is a self improvement recipe;
What matters! I am proud that it is mine!
And better with a plan than rudderless.

cxliv. Who cares if some would see the worst in this,
My feelings even found at odds with selves;
I need conduct their aired cacophony
And earn myself a share of harmony.

BOOK VI – RELATIONSHIP WITH ALCOHOL

i. My use of alcohol was formative
(And formative - the way the word is meant)
It ruled my life for most of twenty years,
Addiction might as well have been my wife.

ii. And when I come to talk of drink (the drug),
I fail to find the words and images:
I write restricted to the clichéd phrase,
I paint again what everyone has seen.

iii. I used to think I was remarkable
And that my drinking differed from the rest,
Somehow in quantity (I drank the most)
Or quality (the greatest joy or woe).

iv. But then a while ago and for some time
(The aim to win recovery) I mixed
With other alcoholics who were dry
And talked of sober, too of drinking days.

v. And thus I found that my experience
Was (in comparison) pedestrian,
Was nothing more (or less) than ordinary,
Was plain expressed, an (alcoholic) norm.

vi. Although I think there were some differences:
It seems to me that then I didn't have
The social and the sexual complement
Of those who drank the same amount of beer.

vii. But saying this, with both deficiencies,
Compared to sober norms, I think I lack,
And failings would appear as more to do
With my psychiatry than alcohol.

viii. This alcoholic norm - decades weren't plain,
But if compared to one who drank as much
The similarities would make you think
That you observed development of twins.

ix. And with this parallel, I work towards
The fact I could describe a shamed excess
(Which might excite the reader's appetite)
But this ignores the fundamental facts.

x. To question me on this approach is right:
I claim that my excess can be side-stepped
When dealing with my alcoholic past,
And if indeed it can, what can't, pray tell?

xi. The fundamentals of relationship
Are lies, invented lies to tell yourself
Which can maintain the steadfast will to drink
And guarantee an alcoholic mind.

xii. An alcoholic needs both myths and lies,
This, how I lived for years on end, so please,
Instead of tales of prurience and woe,
Let me debunk ten myths that laid me low.

xiii. Myth one - a drink will lead to happiness:
Of all the forced economies of truth
(And even knowing some sobriety)
This is the hardest one to overlook.

xiv. The problem is that much is chemical
As *anyone* who drinks a pint or two
(Not least if they have worked towards a thirst)
Will know fine well through feeling happiness.

xv. To know the truth I need to understand
That pleasure cloys, effect habituates,
And in my case to reach that state of joy
I soon need ten where once the one would do.

xvi. I have to see that alcoholic drinks
Will act on mind and body 'naturally',
The feel (perhaps as nature would intend)
Is not because of this, less felt, more real.

xvii. To know the lie for that, I tell myself
A simple cause will have a plain effect,
But alcoholic factors interact;
This ease, not mine, but felt and in the drug.

xviii. These *cons* are my intellectual defence
(The kind of thing I'd think, were thinking right)
But there are other times when I rely
On gut reactions, those things like instinct.

xix. And one of these that I appreciate
(Although I am not sure that it belongs):
The fact that mood (through will or chance) has changed
And though not good, no longer knows despair.

xx. Those feelings of despair would often drive
A hopeless me to my first drink of more
When mixed with drunk's persuit of happiness
(Whose glow is gone now that my mood's improved).

xxi. The second is an attitude I rate,
Appearing times that alcohol will tempt,
And through considering the whole (not parts)
It puts me in a mood where I won't drink.

xxii. I, thanking attitude, appreciate
That I will know a flash of happiness
But too I'll find (with drinks I'll drink on drink)
All, all priorities reorganised.

xxiii. And thus I see a total change in me,
One which outweighs a temporal happiness,
Judgement will keep my throat away from beer
And I am sober for another day.

xxiv. As said, this myth of happiness is key,
If it still stands, then anyone will yield:
Disprove the other nine, and not this one,
You'll drink, however hard you try to shun.

xxv. Myth two - I'm no addict, and drink's no drug:
This one the easiest to prove a lie?
Perhaps for those who watch the supping drunks
But not for those with drinking goggles on.

xxvi. As I consumed without the slightest pause -
Was insistent on using alcohol,
It surely would appear as obvious
These were the throes of drug and drug addict?

xxvii. A painful truth is not to be ignored,
But I (the drunk, that it concerned) did this,
I fatefully ignored, when had I seen
Perhaps I'd had the sense to change my ways.

xxviii. A drink or two is viewed as social norm
It's not surprising that I justified
Four times as much as four more norms the same:
Someone may walk a mile - if I walk four ...

xxix. The total lack of consciousness astounds:
The hopeless drunk is blind to self and world:
Illusions that are held, can be as great
As found in sleep with dreamt imaginings.

xxx. A senseless stone is just as self aware,
Perhaps more so, is on a higher plane:
The stone knows nothing, thus knows nothing wrong,
When I was drunk, all that I knew was false.

xxxi. The drinker fails to even sense the drug,
And drunk or sober views normality
The way complete oblivion permits:
"Ten pints is usual - ten is 'normal' too."

xxxii. The drug will blur the stages of decline
(Decline as steep as any rise before):
Perhaps the depths of dearth, I am not sure,
Appeared to make the scales fall from my eyes.

xxxiii. The means I found which could combat this myth
Was to obtain first hand experience
Of abstinence, and through sobriety
To learn to see the drug for what it was.

xxxiv. Because I was perpetually a drunk
I never noticed drink have it's effect,
I never understood the spectrum's range,
From tipsy through to 'merry', on to drunk.

xxxv. I learnt something of drink, not through myself,
But through a sober observation of
(Now and again) my family and friends
Who drank in front of me (and showed the drink).

xxxvi. Of these ten myths, this lie endures the most,
I still perceive the drink and then the drugs,
My mind refuses to equate the two
And drinks retain the glow of 'Yes, we do'.

xxxvii. I've raised a thousand glasses to myth three
(And what a waste, if there was ever one!)
This blatant lie I loved in spite of sense:
"I'll be more sociable with alcohol."

xxxviii. Most realise the gulf which separates
The sociable from imitations of:
The talkative, or put another way,
The dreaded gift of gab, the garrulous.

xxxix. And this distinction must be born in mind
When weighing up the gifts of alcohol
As those who court these gifts cannot discern,
Though others may soon see the fantasy.

xl. A pint of lager never turned a drunk
To someone graced with social etiquette
Who could amaze with conversation's blaze
And knew the line between offence and jest.

xli. The matter stands at quite the opposite:
A pint of lager often turned a drunk
Into the source of great and sharp offence,
The only social flair - embarrassment.

xlii. A drink is not the last ingredient
Of an old mysterious recipe
That goes to make a social acolyte:
Accessory but not necessity.

xliii. Indeed society accepts the drunk
The way a student would accept a debt,
Required, unpleasant, distanced from the self,
Then paid (and ostracised), soon as can be.

xliv. They're few the social skills requiring drink,
Ignoring clubs' initiation rights
(At sheer excess of which the most would baulk)
There is no actual need for alcohol.

xlv. Thus, socially sobriety's required
For most of everybody's everyday,
To function sober is the social skill
(Before all else) that no one should forget.

xlvi. I've thought that drink would make me sociable!
Then drugs would make me cool and popular!
Each is a myth and must be seen as such,
Excess turns both to antisocial ways.

xlvii. The pub's a friendly place to be, folk chat,
But then, mind you, so too are most restaurants,
Should eating food then, make me sociable?
Could senseless myth show lesser signs of sense?

xlviii. Deceived in this I used to start to drink
In search of social bravery (which harmed):
And now I'm sober, I can still take heart,
And too, I now more often play a part.

xlix. Myth four - the functioning alcoholic:
Unless the function's to consume a beer
I cannot see most drunks achieving this,
Perhaps the myth exists, but not in me.

l. My metaphor - I have a parachute
And start off thinking that the jump goes well
Until discovering my rip-cord's cut:
I function as I hit the ground with speed.

li. Scenario is fatal from the start
So only ignoramuses like me,
Who lack important and required insight
Proceed to jump without first making checks.

lii. Before the crucial stage (asylum's call)
It might be said I function (so to speak)
Although examination would reveal
A drug addict complete with problem drug.

liii. It would be thought by definition that
Those substances that alter mind (like drink)
Do nothing but impede full functioning:
Conclusion is improvement comes without.

liv. Let's try expressing this another way:
Some drink ten pints a night, some even more,
And function too, in holding down a job:
They'd *surely* function better soberly.

lv. It's fair, perhaps, to view the drink as stress
Which some can take despite the quantity
This stressor leads in me (as clouds to rain)
To breakdown (seeds of which were always there).

lvi. I know some manage well compared to me
Also compared to many others too:
(Again by definition) these are not
Alcoholics, and if, a different kind.

lvii. I functioned drinking and obsessed with drink:
I'd just one thought revolving in my head,
The thought of alcohol above all else
Eclipsing any large or small concern.

lviii. So in this way I'd operate, and work,
Although for me the focus of the day
Would not be functioning, but my first drink:
The emphasis - firmly alcoholic.

lix. Through drink I've known the psychiatric couch
(More to the point, I've known the hospitals)
Illness precludes consumption (so does sense):
I never function taking alcohol.

lx. For those who drink, the myth is not in doubt:
And many drunks regard to function as
To ease or slake the thirst and drink a drink -
A step towards stability (they think).

lxi. Myth five - opposed by all and everything,
Believing this suggests I had no brain:
I used to think that there was not a link
Between the drink and sanity's decline.

lxii. It can't be said that my psychiatrists
Have always kept opinions to themselves:
They have professed with utmost clarity,
And what was warned has almost come to pass.

lxiii. Today it seems to me decades ago:
I gained discharge (with harsh diagnosis)
Freed from the first asylum I had known
And leaving I was given this advice:

lxiv. If you so much as ever drink again
Your future stay with us (psychiatry)
Will be lifelong - a frightening prognosis:
Uncomprehended, likely soon fulfilled.

lxv. Perhaps the man on purpose tried to scare,
Perhaps he had discerned my love of drink
And knew if drinking I'd exceed excess:
Whatever motivation, he was clear!

lxvi. Though when it comes to clear, how's black and white?
It always was, and is, and will be 'plain'
It's printed on the label of my pills,
Without assumption: 'Avoid alcohol'.

lxvii. The meaning? Commonly interpreted:
If drunk and lying under serving bar
Please stay alert for falling halves and pints
Avoiding them in case they land on you.

lxviii. And otherwise: avoid as best you can,
Not in the way you would avoid the plague,
But in the way you would avoid a spouse,
Enjoy their company less frequently.

lxix. It's true the meanings seen in these two words
Will range from orthodox to opposite:
In spite of views of those who choose to drink
A child could tell in this 'Avoid' means 'No'.

lxx. Not seeing this for much of most of life
I drank a lot and then would be 'surprised'
On my admission to a hospital:
Again? Oh what bad luck I seem to have!

lxxi. When ill, with elemental innocence,
I'd think that someone poisoned drinks of mine
And this (the myth was true) explained the fact
I could not take the alcohol I drank.

lxxii. To my regret, I knew a way of thought
Which comes with drink, and which is not a norm,
It elevates my mood, with pleasures buoyed:
Paradoxically, this, I should avoid.

lxxiii. Myth six - I spoke of social grace through drink
Though further, drink would make me normal too:
Because I'm weird, so is (surprise, surprise)
How I define the word 'normality'.

lxxiv. The strange but simple definition is
Majority are normal, then there's me,
I feel the most abnormal of them all,
A feeling I would love to exorcise.

lxxv. If found, the cause of abnormality
Were same as finding long lost holy grail:
It is a feeling, and I've said of these
I cannot deal the way the novice can.

lxxvi. But when the feeling's one familiar to
Psychiatrists (a symptom or a sign)
Such emotions will tend to realise,
And thus will make a mess of reasoned life.

lxxvii. Attempts at explanations put aside
I am convinced (with certainty) I'm odd
Though I have found that if I have a drink
The feeling leaves (cruel introspection stops).

lxxviii. And thus subjectively I'm better off
(Although somehow unconscious of myself)
Objective state is quite another thing:
Subjective feelings prove illusory.

lxxix. The facts surrounding this, the 'normal' myth,
Are somehow similar to 'social' myth,
Which tells of talent, not a feeling felt,
Thus easier to demonstrate as false.

lxxx. The 'normal' myth is much more similar
To myth of 'happiness' (that drink brings joy)
And superficial similarities
Might well suggest the two are both the same.

lxxxi. This like is countered by the differences:
The joys of 'normal' myth don't start to cloy
And though normality and happiness
Are feelings (in this case), they are distinct.

lxxxii. This myth is linked to my psychiatry:
I haven't asked the drinking sane their view
But still I'd think that most believe this myth
(Although in passing, not with passion's gleam).

lxxxiii. Having know sobriety, with hindsight,
I see that I'm not normal when I drink,
Although before I knew sobriety
I saw the lie and knew no consequence.

lxxxiv. In truth, I drank believing in this myth,
And then I drank when it had been disproved:
So with, and only with, sobriety
Disproving this helps part the pub and me.

lxxxv. Myth seven - poison didn't poison me:
Much like my views on drink and staying sane
I thought my heart, my brain and arteries
Were free from risk of drinking alcohol.
lxxxvi. In part, to think that I'd escape from harm
Was youthful stance of immortality:
Unlike my views on sanity's upkeep,
They haven't been repeatedly proved wrong.
lxxxvii. By this I mean I'm lucky, and so far
I'm neither diagnosed (nor seem to have)
A physical disease that has been caused
By drinking more than guidance would permit.
lxxxviii. I, saying that, call fingers crossed, touch wood:
Although, admittedly, I am not young,
Remaining are some years ahead in which
The fact I've drunk so much may cause disease.
lxxxix. No reason, but I thought myself immune,
And this as much applied to cigarettes
As to my love of beer: irrespective
I start to see the fairytale in this.
xc. And so to think that drink's a pathogen,
I've learnt to know this of a cigarette,
But to extend disdain to alcohol?
(Though it's required to see the lie in myth).
xci. The risk is there to see (and smell) in smoke,
Though pint of beer still seems so innocent:
A pleasant tasting drink which quenches thirst,
It cannot be that this would lead to harm?
xcii. And here, perhaps, my youth's naivety
Has won the day and overcome my sense,
Who said it must seem bad to make you ill?
When talking myths, this is another one!
xciii. Though being fair, compared to other myths
This seventh is the most innocuous,
As if this myth is held, the end result
Is not increase, but lack of shying from.
xciv. The grounds of health are good as any grounds
To drink less alcohol (or none at all),
Although to give the lie to other lies
Was greater spur to make me abstinent.
xcv. Debunked, this myth will surely motivate
Those individuals with a love of life,
Or maybe those who look to future times
Without that to me well known sense of doom.
xcvi. For me, if life improves as I invest,
This lie shown lie will keep me from the drink:
I think the *pros* and *cons* of this are met,
I don't see health as an advantage yet.

xcvii. Myth eight - there's friendship to be found in pubs:
You need to have a pure naivety
(Mine I have mentioned once or twice before)
In order that you would believe this myth.

xcviii. To take equation and rework to truth:
Friends meet in pubs (by this I mean meet up):
This does not mean that this is where they met
And rarely is the pub the bond which joins.

xcix. I failed to understand, appreciate,
That people drink together and although
The drink induces 'sociability'
The man who raises glass is not your friend.

c. I never was a judge of character,
And drunk in pubs, my discernment vanished,
So I would put my trust in anyone,
And many times that trust was proved misplaced.

ci. With this in mind, in pubs I would mistake
The self-assurance drinkers gained through drink
For evidence of worth, for inner good
(In others - I'd not feel this trait in self).

cii. With nous perhaps you'd make some friends in pubs,
But I admired the drunk for drinking drink,
And with my sieve as coarsely set as this
You needn't guess the kind of friends I'd make.

ciii. I think I am perhaps the only one
Who entertained this myth and for so long:
It only takes but slight experience
To learn to separate the chaff from grain.

civ. It was a streak of pure naivety
That meant this myth could hold me tightly grasped,
Impose rose-tinted views I held of pubs,
And lead me to mistake the foul for fair.

cv. Requiring you suspend your disbelief
It simply can't be overemphasised
The sheer degree of my credulity,
The faith I placed in this unlikely myth.

cvi. My optimism knew no earthly bounds
I (drinking alcohol) would see the good
In any fellow man (who drank a pint)
Who would exchange a friendly word with me.

cvii. Perhaps I wasn't wrong, perhaps I was,
Perhaps one fact could best be introduced:
Of all the many folk I've met in pubs
There's few remain as social contacts still.

cviii. Of those described this is the daftest myth
Disproved by slightest bit of common sense,
But to believe is not as dumb as that
I've heard that people think the world is flat.

cix. Myth nine - the myth that I was in control:
Surprising numbers think this of their life
And for a lucky few the myth comes true
But for majority this myth's a dream.

cx. My myth I held: that I controlled a drug
When actually this had control of me,
And here we see opposed alternatives
Which would suggest judgements are relative.

cxi. So drink controlled my life, or opposite?
To find which better fits I think I will
Investigate my motivations, but,
Helped by hindsight and kept sobriety.

cxii. So did I want to piss my every pence
Against the wall? I think I did, and that
Now demonstrates to me, not my control,
But lack thereof (the drink controlled my mind).

cxiii. So did I want to spend my every hour
Just propping up the bar? I think I did,
Which demonstrates to me, not my control,
But drug which held dominion over me.

cxiv. So did I want that every thought concerned
Consuming alcohol? This didn't strike
As strange when drinking, now this demonstrates
That my addiction knew control of me.

cxv. With these examples we begin to see
Exactly how the *pros* and *cons* weigh up:
Thus to believe the substance of this myth
Requires a monumental bias shown.

cxvi. Mind over drug - for some this comes to pass,
Not for alcoholics - and I was one:
I neither knew a moderation's grace,
Nor mild intoxication's balm which soothes.

cxvii. Drug over mind - this often comes to pass,
And did for me, although I didn't see:
I knew and lived excess to its excess
(This word 'excess', here viewed pejorative).

cxviii. Control - more prime example can't be found
Of those who think that they control something
When they're in fact controlled by that same thing
Than drinkers and their drink which rules complete.

cxix. Control - regaining it requires the shift
From drunkenness to sleek sobriety
With fundamental change of attitude
To cause to loathe not love what goes with drink.

cxx. Avoidance as a form of management
Stops short of cure as such but cures the same:
For me control arrived through abstinence
And thus to stop at none is best defence.

cxxi. Myth ten - the devil drink was friend to me:
Put otherwise - I liked my drug of choice
And thus I joyed to feed my love of drink
Ignoring fact this was addiction now.

cxxii. I made a friend of every drunk habit
In any guise or form (this was the myth):
I guess myth ten is just embodiment
Of myths to nine in gross and craven form.

cxxiii. Myth ten is then perhaps a stone inscribed
With other myths that guided crooked ways,
An idol representing all that's wrong,
The gold that gilds the broad and easy path.

cxxiv. Myth ten was spur to sanctify the myths,
A call to high alcoholic worship,
A focus for perpetual thoughts of drink,
A faith, following which produced belief.

cxxv. Myth ten, the devil drink the friend, became
A figurehead to guide the sinking ship,
The prow's projecting wooden scaled mermaid,
Addressing own, who would not sing to me.

cxxvi. Myth ten - my personal religion's god:
To form my Bacchus, other myths and drink
Rolled into one and deified to make
Drink incarnate, a power unto itself.

cxxvii. And with this deity (myth ten made god)
There were both rites and prayers, and miracles:
You doubt as Thomas, let me talk you through
Just three which should be good to prove the point.

cxxviii. Miracle one - mundane but of the heart:
Appearance of a bottle of spirits
Would be transformed to sacred shape which seemed
Of greater worth than any form or thing.

cxxix. Miracle two - to see in parallax:
A month without, erring, I strayed along
Supermarket's dread aisle of alcohol:
My vision warped - far was near - shelving moved.

cxxx. Miracle three - money's abolition:
All cash, credit, turns coupons clipped for beer,
Equivalence is all that matters now,
The currency is fluid measurement.

cxxxi. This myth, the last in place, and first to fall:
If you can see a pint upon the bar
And there's no sign suggests the holy grail
You are half way to your sobriety.

cxxxii. Disproof of myth requires a changed habit,
And not result of mind's conscious effort,
Me seeing lie in this tenth myth helped show
The other myths as lies ... small acorns grow.

cxxxiii. I hope you guess that I (at least in part)
Am disabused of fronds of these ten myths,
If not of all, then of the major strands:
It's for a year I've managed abstinence.

cxxxiv. Before I talk of what may be for me
Recovery (although I speak to soon
For any certainty) please let me first
Digress and share some thoughts on alcohol.

cxxxv. If I look back upon my drinking days
With those rose tinted spectacles I love,
I see a lust for drink, an urge to quaff,
Which was impossible to overcome.

cxxxvi. Whereas if I look back on drinking days
Without rose tinted spectacles I loved,
I see the lack of that restraint required
To keep myself from drinking to excess.

cxxxvii. At first the difference seems to have import:
Was Humpty Dumpty pushed or did he fall?
Was it excess of lust and drive and will?
Or did I lack the brake the rest possessed?

cxxxviii. At root the question's psychological
And deals with motivations and their ilk:
But is the reason really that which counts?
As either way, I drank excessively.

cxxxix. I think with drugs (and drink remains a drug)
The will is less important than you'd think,
The crux is if you take, or if you don't:
Strong willed can lapse (no thought can change this fact).

cxl. And to have stood a year without the drink:
Sometimes I'm filled with pride by what I've done,
At other times I see what I've achieved
As but necessity's invented scheme.

cxli. Whichever way you choose to look at it,
Sobriety becomes an object owned,
A prized possession which you've earnt with work,
A something advantageous, yours alone.

cxlii. And you can gift your friends and family
Some grace from this that is objectified:
And when you interact without the drink
You forge the type of memories that count.

cxliii. Sobriety - the choosing of a choice:
To drink is not to choose but stays a *must* :
For most who drink too much the drug will force,
And too for those as me who thought they chose.

cxliv. Sobriety - the spirit of my times:
My other times are soaked with clouded dregs,
Let day one sober mark both new found life,
And break with demon drink (with break, less strife).

BOOK VII – COMPLEXITIES OF LOCATION

i. I feel that I begin to have a feel
For London's ways - although not born and bred
In this, the behemoth of towns, I've now
Lived ten years both in, and, at times, around.

ii. Despite this past decade, I cannot claim
Familiarity - I'm worse than most
To know London in parts - and known fraction,
Small part that doesn't represent the whole.

iii. And London seems a proud maturing oak
Which stands with roots as deep as branches tall -
I've lived in both the roots and canopy
But tend to gravitate to those things base.

iv. In some respects perspective's to discard;
In London high and low rub cheek to cheek
And opposites are both involved - partake -
Are players in, the same phenomenon.

v. In some respects perspective's to maintain;
With similarities a world apart -
Youth's tendency to celebrate alone,
And wealth and poverty immiscible.

vi. Oh, what a wonderful city, with tube
And bus and overground and open space
And theatre and commerce and shining light
And river sight and opportunity!

vii. Oh, what a terrible city, with crime
And knife and poverty and homelessness
And cost and strain and clamour and delay
And stress and those who having not, have not!

viii. Solipsistic and London loves alike
Can contradict themselves - both best explained
If things went well - if love I spent on them
Were love requited rather than one way.

ix. But as things stand I find myself in awe
Of some complex that does more harm than good,
And wanting to admire what seems upright
I halt at incompatibilities.

x. London attracts the superlative word;
The best: the worst: finest: harshest: the most;
With this in mind, but one adjective fits -
In many dimensions, London's *extreme*.

xi. My perspective is mixed as much as me:
Two London's grant a home to rich and poor -
I feel regard, am envious of both,
And find myself outsider looking in.

xii. To feel at home surrounded by London
I'd need to have to normalise myself,
I'd need to be at home inside my head,
And then my ease might near to born and bred.

xiii. Aspects of London's ethos are a boon
And when comparison is drawn they make
Her fair above the rest, because of just
And strong spirit of this community.

xiv. You can't ignore the proud independence
That emanates and flows from Londoners
And is expressed in stance and look and strut
Displayed in workmen, in those well to do.

xv. And each assumes the pride that he or she
Has made their way, carved out a slice of life,
A stake that's rightly theirs, their property,
Which none but fate can claim or take away.

xvi. And London is a place of charity
With purse and wallet giving just to give -
Beyond the loving gift of alms or food
Sweet charity's an institution here.

xvii. Which reaches out to countless refugees
Who come to London wishing to escape
Injustice - here a welcome's extended
With its perfection and imperfection.

xviii. Capital, where beside the play of wealth
Exists experience of suffering:
Practising have served hard apprenticeships
In that profession, or whatever trade.

xix. London's ethos knows hardship as knows ease,
Perhaps the one more than the other shared
In communality - and sharing woes
Permits a grace when faced with troubled times.

xx. Londoner's mood (ethos's mood) is good:
Although the most prefer to keep themselves
Close to themselves, exchange a word or phrase,
Nine times from ten detect a note of cheer.

xxi. And if you find you lack a shared interest
The capital itself will serve for one,
Uniting those that live beneath her name
And making overlap from but a place.

xxii. As London knows an ethos which is strong,
There's unity - transport's a binding link -
As all would wish to go, to travel to,
To integrate with other parts of town.

xxiii. The parts converge into continuum,
The whole projecting an identity
And merging through postcode or 020 -
With different feels and flavours, parts unite.

xxiv. And with all this the ethos perseveres
And too has persevered - London's not new -
And neither its ethos - both rise and fall -
Both passed from all to one, from one to all.

xxv. Aspects of London's ethos are woeful
And when comparison is drawn they make
Her worse below the rest, because of vain
And wanton play of some though not of all.

xxvi. And London life is run by proud elites
Who vie to be superior and raise
Such ethos high, who strive to demonstrate
The worth of superficial vanity.

xxvii. Theses people schmooze, congratulate themselves
On being those above the rest, mainly
Through privilege not worth - predilections
To patronise, be supercilious.

xxviii. And here a strong individualism
Attains new heights and goes beyond the state
Of looking out for self and turns to that
Which just rejects, ignoring others' plight.

xxix. In some, beside a love of family,
Hostility towards the fellow man,
And stronger so when he's a stranger too -
And they'll say: 'God helps him who helps himself'.

xxx. London has temples to Mammon's worship
With luxuries beyond the dream of most -
Displaying rich indulgence, these the spoils
Of way of life but known and kept to few.

xxxi. Londoners gaze in adoration on
This wealth which is displayed for all to see
And seem to dream that all can reach this height -
A strange pipe dream of universal wealth.

xxxii. And so the ethos of the well to do
Is anathema to the general good,
And not just that but it is idolised
As if it were the only worth in life.

xxxiii. And fear and envy show in what is read -
Staple digest of free newspapers' leads
Would seem roll-call of wealth and misery,
And thus they sell their advertising space.

xxxiv. London's a group of animosities
And differences that lead to troubled peace -
Some cabs refuse to go to South London,
0207 carves out people's lives.

xxxv. On name alone some fear to tread in parts,
West London is a different beast to East,
A fundamental change to cross the Thames
Regardless whether heading north or south.

xxxvi. Unpleasantness remains intransigent,
Maybe unfair - perhaps it stays the same -
I lived here in 1992, and
In years since - more I'm sure - no different land.

xxxvii. And London's brand of isolation is
Equivalent to an independence,
Experience of which prepares these souls
To function and depend upon themselves.

xxxviii. Londoners demonstrate self-reliance
And hence display a strength of character
In facing hardship, ease or everyday -
Their self-dependency uncovers worth.

xxxix. Each soul remains as grouped - and yet alone -
The individual tends to their own care,
Though favour's trade with friends and family
Will always play a central role in things.

xl. Each citizen a self-sufficient isle,
The haven's calm accepting social trade,
Resourced to harbour visitors and self,
And with ability to weather storms.

xli. With isolation of independence
A self-reliance stands nurtured and born -
And it's almost approaching consummate,
This staunch, sure individuality.

xlii. And what an attitude towards the world -
With self's ability to work and play
To deal with stress, to manage in extremes,
And to unwind the mind at times, relax.

xliii. To stand upright in firm independence -
This lesson taught by London and its school -
And what single ability does more
To help souls thrive in this wide world of ours.

xliv. And if the self is bettered, others helped -
If you do not look out for number one
Then how can you assist some others' needs -
Thus, willed individuals support the whole.

xlv. Independence is a clarion call,
And those following, like to devotees
Of god who gives in next, and in this life,
A god of isolated, merging selves.

xlvi. When putting this, our world to rights, the best
To start at home, and tending your own plot
Achieve improvement there - Londoner starts
With self, and concentrates on good through this.

xlvii. The home's a castle (these souls Englishmen)
In each an independent sanctuary
Incorporated to protect ideals
That those who live within hold true and dear.

xlviii. Thus, as individuals, Londoners stand
(In isolation or in unison)
Independent: they bond with this city,
And bond with those who live here proud and free.

xlix. But then there is the other side of things
With isolation through independence
Becoming dire constraint and absolute
That turns into a harsh reality.

l. I speak of isolation that I know
And guess that others know as well as me,
The kind of drought of social intercourse
That leaves the isolated cracked and dry.

li. In London you could rot - I feel I do -
And none would turn their head or blink an eye,
And life, retreating from all company,
Would find expression in a solitude.

lii. And people turn away in this harsh town,
And living here has made me do the same,
Perhaps not that, but daily solitude
Has chafed my attitude to fellow man.

liii. I failed to help a man I knew by sight
(Some months ago) he lay upon the ground,
I didn't stop because I knew the man
To drink his beer upon the street - no grounds.

liv. Five years ago: the same with different man:
I offered help and wish the right of that
Would counteract the guilt I feel for this;
I'm less the man as these five years have passed.

lv. It seems this brand of isolation that
Has made me shy of social duties now:
Perhaps I never knew them all so well,
But what is clear is that I'm getting worse.

lvi. For some the net of social life runs thin
And isolated they reject contact -
Like me, those poor in knack to form friendship
Will find themselves enclosed in iron grasp.

lvii. So solitude is fostered, comes to pass,
In conversations where some speak aloud
As isolated from the world and selves:
The dialogue evaporates to chintz.

lviii. And London's brand of isolation is
A world apart from others you may find:
The others relative, this absolute,
This isolation's pure as pure can be.

lix. And that remains as my subjective view:
The faces in the street on rainy days
Might make you think that many think the same:
On sunny days you see the opposite.

lx. But anyone who wants to be alone
Will be left so here, all alone as sole -
If you really desire to isolate
London's a place that can alienate.

lxi. The magnitude of London's state defies -
Beside extreme the word to use is great -
A stately, noble scale is resonant
Of huge expanses: green and red and grey.

lxii. Amazing buildings grow to line the streets
Which are befitting of this capital,
And there's not one or two set jewels in crown
But multitude, a cornucopia.

lxiii. Magnificent to view or apprehend,
The splendour trumpets forth stability;
En masse the building state that you've arrived:
If you belong they state a pride in place.

lxiv. This source brings joy to each and everyone,
An architecture great and small and new
And old - this overwhelming plenitude
Will satisfy the most of any taste.

lxv. The magnitude of London is a boon
Permitting that diversity which grows,
A gilt facet of this metropolis -
London's variety is spice of life.

lxvi. The goods of all the world are here to buy,
And pay - the stores will stock at your demand -
A multitude of wares and shops and stalls
Adorn varied markets and parts of town.

lxvii. And manners, modes of dress, as seen at home
In other continents are seen at home
In London's streets - as if the world had come
Here to display cultural diversity.

lxviii. Despite this great and grand variety
There's many parts of London which will strike
As first and foremost English capital
And stud the crown with jewels of national pride.

lxix. The magnitude of London gives a choice
To each inhabitant who can adopt
Each, any way of life, or make a mix -
A wealth of choices for the choosing here.

lxx. Vote left or right for mayor, the spectrum's there:
Commuting - drive a car or ride a bike:
Then socialise - West End or Islington:
Always options in diverse capital.

lxxi. A chain's not fit to call itself a chain
Without a London store, if your poison's
Consumption, go indulge to hearts content,
And choose that choice in company of like.

lxxii. London's offered palette is limitless,
The choice of brush remains the one who paints,
And combinations drawn from what is here
Become to those who live here, more than dear.

lxxiii. The magnitude of London's state defies -
The word of choice to use is behemoth -
The huge exteriors will undermine
And overpower with ease light hearted thoughts.

lxxiv. This scale that's massive overwhelms and pins,
Intimidates, denudes and silences -
People in place here do not have a place,
The unassailable grandeur is all.

lxxv. This scale is consonant with power elites
But what of common modes of life? you can't
Make Londoner's mentalities inflate
To heights of self-importance through what's grand?

lxxvi. And in reflected scale - congestion chokes
(It seems almost always and most highways)
And through a rage will make some roads a hell
Of vying vehicles and pedestrians.

lxxvii. The magnitude of London is a woe
A weight of weights in an expanse unknown -
The faces on the streets, on undergrounds
Are not perceived as leaves upon the tree.

lxxviii. *En masse* from A to B people commute
Unwilling or unable to reside
And work close by - and with this rush hour's bane
Makes much delay for many Londoners.

lxxix. There are ten times a million strangers here,
Each one in passing leaves a fading taste
Or slight intrusion - an averted gaze,
Or just a glance, may scratch or take with it.

lxxx. And if you feel at odds with London's ways
The odds are stacked against you - this no place
To be experiencing even slight
Antipathy towards a hash surround.

lxxxi. The magnitude of London leaves no choice:
You'll do as others do through force of will
Or force of wills and to oppose or try
Not to conform, a form of suicide.

lxxxii. Observances become monolithic,
Supported by a multitude - there is
Habit to learn, and rule which needs obeyed -
Each walk of London life has its manual.

lxxxiii. And, to be fair, (because we talk of scale)
London achieves the grand and minuscule -
The mansion house and so studio flat:
Despite their size the each can be a dream.

lxxxiv. A London armed with magnitude and size
(The small may override with multitude)
We have a behemoth of stark extremes
Which may fulfil or ruin many dreams.

lxxxv. London society is not the same
As that which teems, abounds, in other towns,
The most this stays a difference of degree
Although almost of fundamental type.

lxxxvi. Just take the kids to school or play cricket
To see that close community on show
Which people try to claim that London lacks -
Your friends revolve around activity.

lxxxvii. In London like associates with like,
And building bonds that flourish thus puts paid
To thought that London lacks a joie de vivre
Or lacks attendant grace of social ease.

lxxxviii. Londoners meet, and meet for diverse grounds -
For any form of communality -
A beer or fine art: for some it is both;
In cheer or in earnest: for social fare.

lxxxix. What stands out in social Londoners is:
Facility, ability and sense -
Few know their trade and cannot illustrate
With ease the smallest of intricacies.

xc. Few write without their having read and known;
Few would argue their point, unless they could
So back up argument with cause and fact -
Thus many themes are dealt with expertly.

xci. For want of better words, Londoners seem
Reflective in their mode, and exhibit
Reflective joys so much reflective moods -
They've thought about their pleasures more than most.

xcii. With this reflection a maturity -
And that sometimes displayed beyond their age;
Few speak without first having paused in thought:
Few act in haste without considering.

xciii. And there's a sense of self-assuredness
Runs side by side with sensed belonging to
This great metropolis - a Londoner -
A civic pride correctly put on show.

xciv. Communal sense of purpose is displayed,
And that as side by side with sense of self,
And both are leavens to inhabitants
Which make them rise to justify their worth.

xcv. And there's a sense of balance to be found
That saunters hand in hand with broad and wide
Experience of life - few here naive -
The blinkered ones have brought it on themselves.

xcvi. London society should pride itself
(Regardless delving low or climbing high)
On its variety, ability,
With it a wealth of speciality.

xcvii. London society is not the same
As that which teems, abounds, in other towns,
Difference would seem no difference of degree
But errs towards a fundamental type.

xcviii. London society's no monolith,
More it's a loose community of spheres
Which overlap - this intersection's slight:
Associations grow within one sphere.

xcix. But still these spheres are like to bastions
Unto themselves - the each deciding on
A membership and code and rules and modes -
Each sphere is closed as if fraternity.

c. The spheres are served with sealed exclusiveness -
Some attributes prerequisite to join -
A given mode of life, a given view
On ranks and social status seems required.

ci. The social patois that's who's in and out
Both captivates and fascinates most folk,
In glossy gossip columns read with glee,
And too in their own personal affairs.

cii. And it boils down to that one basic fact -
If you're in it's grand, and if out, bad luck -
And this mentality of exclusion
If fair or foul, results in tiers in life.

ciii. Those spheres that operate have tendency
To be established; fleet street journalists:
People who live on this or that estate:
Maybe a class of wealth: a wealth of class.

civ. Whatever constitution, fact remains,
Outsider stays outsider (regardless):
Exerting pressure (even if it's great)
Is not about to move the social sphere.

cv. Those in might say that they have earned their place,
And that those out so earned disfavoured state -
Such is the mechanism of elites;
Thus speaks self-serving rule without mandate.

cvi. Societies all have their rules and, yes,
You'll find them here, but with a twist of those
Social elites which makes for fun and games,
Exclusion, ridicule and pulling rank.

cvii. And these elites apply to low as high -
The local with an edge and so the Ritz -
In both there is a pecking order's rank
In both there's those with status - those without.

cviii. A high and wide conglomerate of clubs -
Find some or one where you're at home, you're in;
If you're asocial in society
Pray don't fall foul of exclusivity.

cix. The liberty to do as you should wish
Is met as you would meet a welcome host
Whose grace permits, so too encourages,
Diverse enjoyments had on their account.

cx. London invites and tempts you to indulge
And grants a well earned licence to enjoy -
Whichever appetite your stomach wills
You'll find an offered morsel which will sate.

cxi. The zenith of ascending liberty
Is choice, and Londoners have choice in choice -
In searching for a given land's cuisine
You'll find a part of town with ten restaurants.

cxii. A mug or cup of tea - one from a caf,
Or sweet patisserie or some café:
Tetley, Earl Grey or English Breakfast brew,
Chinese loose leaves or Japanese green tea.

cxiii. Perhaps coffee; instant or filter fresh,
An espresso, babyccino for tots,
Cappuccino, machiato or black
(The liberty of Americano).

cxiv. Urban nymph liberty has sweet sister:
Freedom - and Londoners are free to soar
(At times their only check would seem their purse)
To heights above imagination's arc.

cxv. As free to laugh, as free to play, as free
To work and ease and wile their fears away,
As free from censorship, as free from gross,
Ill-framed law, freedom of democracy.

cxvi. Land of the free, admittedly elsewhere,
But London differentiates itself:
Here we are free to be ourselves, whilst there
Freedom's the millionaire they dream to be.

cxvii. Although I intimated liberty's
Perhaps an attribute of wealth - London's
Is just as much an attribute of mind,
Here's found the source which keeps this freedom fresh.

cxviii. Before all else a mind to watch their own,
A mind to guard their own from any type
Of harm or threat that might perchance appear:
A liberty through group's cohesive force.

cxix. One London rule is plain - don't interfere
In other's lives and in simple return
They will not interfere in yours - and this,
To each on equal footing, grants freedom.

cxx. Londoner's minds are free, possessing that
Firm liberty which rules their character -
This quality so too gives quantity
To fine aspects of proud community.

cxxi. This London's liberty is hampered by
But one contradictory disadvantage:
For some the only checks to wild extremes
Are those ones put in place by will of self.

cxxii. For well balanced majority these checks
Are sound, although London undoes the weak
Of mind with its unbounded liberty -
Why have one drink when five or six invite?

cxxiii. And its not that those weak of mind are full
And active in pursuit of their downfall -
Though that may seem to be the case - but yet
For some the fall's a passive fall from grace.

cxxiv. To give a passive reason to explain
The alcoholic state and lack of grace;
That shows facile avoidance - lazy thought;
No passive turn, that turn to alcohol.

cxxv. Show me a gleeful drunk and I'll admit
We are not forced to falling through our woes -
Those weak of mind turn to a poor disguised
Solace, the most through stress, not passively.

cxxvi. And liberty is not a passive voice,
London encourages the weak of mind -
In that the solace that is sought is found,
Behaviour frowned upon but still allowed.

cxxvii. Solace on show, to say the least, diverse
And stays solace to those with strength of mind -
A pint's a pint as seen to average man:
But downfall to the alcoholic man.

cxxviii. I would not favour prohibition now,
And London's stance on this is liberty
(Or less than that) - but it is difficult
For those few prone to fall in times of stress.

cxxix. But comprehend for some it must be like
Past - not distant - the differing centuries
When opiates were bought and sold without
Prescription for whatever wanted grounds.

cxxx. This London liberty is more than some,
And less than some, and most would think the mix
Is right - although with hesitations made
I would agree with most that praise this town.

cxxxi. To save the weak of mind you'd need restrict
Majority to such degree that just
The basic liberties remained - this way
Is not the English way - none would support.

cxxxii. This liberty is gift of length of rope -
The weak of mind they hang themselves, without
They'd find another way - they put, the most,
The rope to other use, and raise a toast.

cxxxiii. Despite what I have said I would not dream
To raise contention here - I love London,
And like all those in love, love none the less
For faults that I or others may discern.

cxxxiv. This passion tempered by ill circumstance:
Afflicted by the family disease
I found welcoming roofs both sparse and racked
With harsh conflict - their precondition health.

cxxxv. I gravitated to the streets, too scared
To steal, too proud to beg, subsisting on
My benefits and Freedom Pass, preferred
Both beer and cigarettes to warmth and food.

cxxxvi. The time was winter and my tireless mind
And London reached uneasy status quo -
My poor budgeting and excited state
Precluded stasis - dread asylum hailed.

cxxxvii. Before that came to pass, I subsisted,
Not falling foul of London law, I saw
And lived aspects of London which complete
That broad landscape of it I now can view.

cxxxviii. The time was not an even time and times
I rue, recall with dread and woe, and I
Antagonised both friends and family -
I hope that now I am a wiser man.

cxxxix. The time was not a sober time and though
Not foul of Metropolitan Police
I became unwelcome in many pubs -
I pray that I am more restrained today.

cxl. Experience was filtered at this time,
Refracted through an elevated mood -
Regardless, I was in proximity
With actualities obscure to some.

cxli. And then the streets of London took me in,
With blend of harsh strictness that's inherent,
And met the basics (whilst my mother shunned)
As their welcome did not require my health.

cxlii. This way of life did not improve my mind,
But some with choice between a freedom and
That arbitrary incarceration that
Is bedlam, they might choose homeless freedom.

cxliii. Many do - it's a choice that most don't face -
And some assume that bedlam's sanctuary -
I pray and hope that in future, as like
For most, I need not have to choose again.

cxliv. Few pleasant memories or tales to tell
But I survived a time that could have felled,
London was, in this way, a friend in need,
By common definition, friend indeed.

BOOK VIII – ASOCIAL INTERACTION

i. And there was time long gone when all went well,
A time of waking growth and sense of self,
A time when childhood's blithe enchantment grew
And blossomed blossoms rare and magical.

ii. A year's duration then, no more no less,
The time I'd grown to seven years of age,
And one of Britain's cities was my home:
Not free but ignorant of cares and woes.

iii. The world unfurled a constant source of joy
(Not known as such because nought else was known)
And hiding as behind of each delight
Was soon revealed another equal one.

iv. The sun was out, I'd be surfeit with warmth,
If it was cold, I'd look forward to snow,
The rainy days, I'd splash in rain with glee,
The windy days, I'd lean into the wind.

v. And I'd enjoy with friends on equal terms,
With thought devoid of adult jealousies,
With thought unsullied by forbidden fruit,
With thought of smile and laugh, and thought of play.

vi. And each small friend was just as full content,
And words and talk and chatter would reflect
The depth of life through straight simplicity:
A sky reflected in a seaside pool.

vii. All through the day I smiled in happiness
And when I smiled, someone returned the smile,
All day I smiled in blissful ignorance
And at that age that was sufficient due.

viii. And nothing troubled, not one speck of woe,
Not any thought or real disturbing angst:
One nightmare did repeat (were it so called)
And even that concluded in a joy.

ix. This year of memory, my golden age,
And as you'll see unfold against my will,
This, where I learnt my stunted social grace,
And failing exemplar for later life.

x. Around this age you need to just present
And adults start to make a fuss of you,
You need but smile and mutter syllables -
Your company initiates applause.

xi. A pretty one is one who doesn't cry,
A clever one is one who asks for sweets,
Politeness is to know the words thank you,
Maturity to be the size you are.

xii. My golden age was time of wondered joy
Compress of childhood to a single year
Then I'd but smile, and praise and grace were mine,
But laugh, and all would turn out good and fine.

xiii. And then this golden age of innocence
Began to fade from gold to silver greys,
Things dulled, though nothing in comparison
To how the sheen would fade in days to come.

xiv. The golden age was wounded close to death
By mass uproot of home and hearth and friends;
The family (no father - they'd divorced)
Moved to another city: reason - work.

xv. The blurred boundaries of gold and silver age
Will merge into the other over years:
With me they're drawn with greater clarity
When looking back upon my life's time-line.

xvi. A glee had transformed to a boisterous joy,
Thus changed, some golden rays persisted still:
An outing to the swimming pool, a game
Of hide and seek or playing in the street.

xvii. But school was harsh and I was singled out
And picked upon for talking differently,
And picked upon for dressing like a tramp,
And too was picked upon for being posh.

xviii. The world extended, others round matured,
And developed motives sensed alien,
These motives were nascent antipathy
And played with power in way which I admired.

xix. Though awed, I wasn't quick to cotton on
And interacted as I would have if
I still remained in golden age now gone,
I stayed in innocent stagnating pool.

xx. I couldn't quite perceive the right or wrong,
And my moral hypotheses would see
The good or bad of deeds dependent on
The absence or presence of punishment.

xxi. And through this time, in search of happiness,
My mother met her partner, and not wed
But cohabiting, fate so blessed them with
A daughter, my half-sister then a tot.

xxii. At school I played the part of teacher's pet,
A dim reminder to the golden age:
Through doing clever sums and reading books
I gained at least one fond admiring gaze.

xxiii. In silver age I learnt some joys of mind,
The joy of learning that which I was taught,
Encouragement in fields where I excelled,
And warm reward for bookishness's bent.

xxiv. In this the silver age I slight progressed,
But with the sudden change of home and hearth
I neither thrived nor fell retreating back,
But seemed to compensate against a lack.

xxv. The next mile-stone was comprehensive school
And marked the death of warming thoughts of past,
With change of age from silver to the bronze
Arose a changing state of happiness.

xxvi. What I had seen as animosity
Now reared her head as cruelty and spite:
In others and in me, as it grew fun
To joke and tease and to humiliate.

xxvii. In school a pecking order firm in place,
I neither on the top nor bottom rung,
But overall as closer to the base
Received some stick, more than I handed out.

xxviii. In this the bronze a something subtle grew
That had been planted in the silver times
A seed of difference sprouted shoots and leaves
Alienation grew around, in me.

xxix. Aspects of this difference were positive:
I had a brother in a higher year,
With ease I still remained the teacher's pet,
I went some way with formed relationships.

xxx. Aspects of this difference were negative:
Respect was through my brother's acts and deeds,
I known and classified and called a swot,
I formed relationships - they did not gel.

xxxi. I started to perceive myself different,
And that perhaps as all do at this age,
It never clicked that others were like me,
I lived untutored in cerebral spheres.

xxxii. The opening of the bronze was good and grand
With scant unpleasant moment standing out,
Few would detect the problems which have come
To view me at this stage and at this age.

xxxiii. Around this time I took inventory
And saw I bore the corpse of golden age
About with me, as parts of it still glowed;
To reminisce brought breath of joys though faint.

xxxiv. And it was time and I interred the corpse
Complete with rites and sadness and regret
As should befit a thing that once brought weal:
Respect much like should grace a favoured star.

xxxv. The place a secret only known to me
Bore this inscription on the ruined tomb:
"To joyous time of innocence sore missed
Remembered source of bliss and sustenance".

xxxvi. And thus transition silver to the bronze
Was painless, marked by little woe, few tears,
Progressed in ways as like normality
As would be found in great majority.

xxxvii. And then there grew a state of open war
Between my mother's and her partner's views,
Him granted license free to vent his spleen
On me, my brother and of course on her.

xxxviii. His type is common - it demands respect
And shouts and rants and screams to terrorise
Abusing its authority, enraged
The more when what's demanded is withheld.

xxxix. The kind is that of archetypal drunk,
This one, dry-drunk on magnified self-worth
And showed the raging anger that's drinks curse,
Blood rising to his face at sober times.

xl. He fought both frontal and a petty war
Against perceived opponents, me as one,
And this warfare remained unfair, unjust,
I was a child and he a full-grown man.

xli. His anger maimed and stunted and confused:
On tender cusp of entering adult world
I was exposed to violent tendencies,
Antipathies the like I'd never seen.

xlii. Displayed with adult rage of man on child
I bent and buckled, weaker of the two,
In youth and vigour I withdrew from life
And too withdrew from forming memories.

xliii. The times are lost as in a dream or trance,
I recollect the waking hours at night
With shouting keeping me from wanted sleep
With blame attached to self, self's impotence.

xliv. And it got bad with cults thrown in as well
Some innocent, although, some pernicious
The kind of holidays you didn't share
With school friends, neighbours, not with anyone.

xlv. Alienation was the clear result
As I withdrew from normal modes of cheer:
Alienation from the group and self
As I became one different from the rest.

xlvi. Withdrawn, my world began to polarise
I separated pleasantness from pain
And compartmentalised experience,
Which was a building block for later ills.

xlvii. I stayed a swot at school and loved to learn,
The motivation stayed in war as peace,
Though much of what I learnt in form of rote,
And that in academic disciplines.

xlviii. My mother and her partner brick by brick
Built hell in spite of heaven, woes self-made,
A child at heart I tried and failed to build
A heaven blest in spite of hell which killed.

xlix. *The skies they were ashen*, also *sober*;
The leaves they were crispéd and parched *and sere -*
And *it was night* in *lonesome October*
Of this, *my most immemorial year*:

l. I, close to that *dim lake* they call *Auber*,
In the misty, drear *mid region of Weir*:
I, *down by* that *dank tarn* that's named *Auber*,
And hard by *ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir*.

li. And *here once* in a bower idyllic
Below willow, I joined joy *with my soul -*
Under willow and *with Psyche, my soul -*
And in those *days my heart* was seraphic.

lii. But *it was night* in *lonesome October,*
And talk between Psyche and me was sere -
Our thoughts were *serious* also *sober*,
We failed to mark the *night* of *nights* of *year*.

liii. Psyche mild said beware, I said proceed,
I pacified my *Psyche and kissed her*
And conquered her scruples, ill thoughts *and gloom*
We passed on *to the end of the vista*:

liv. Our path barred *by the door* of ruined *tomb*
I murmured to Psyche's ear: "*Sweet sister*
What can you read, what's *written sweet sister*
Upon *the door of this legended tomb*?"

lv. Her answer: "Golden age - your golden age! -
Here is the vault of thy lost golden age!"
My aching *heart* turned *ashen and sober*
Just *as the leaves that were* withered *and sere*.

lvi. And with the anger I'd been taught of late
I burned to desecrate the ruined tomb,
I yearned so much for those distant past years
With even memories preferred to now.

lvii. My one desire that happiness returned
I forced the vault, detached the corpse's head,
Moved by contrast of gone and present days
I bore the head in cloth away with me.

lviii. At home I cleaned the disembodied face
Removing signs of death I combed his hair
And wrapped him in a silken handkerchief
And planted him in pot of earthenware.

lix. And in this pot a graft of rose of red:
I watered it both night and day with tears
And placing it where it drew light and warmth
I prayed each night, by and to and for it.

lx. This starts the story of my potted rose,
Initially a blessing and comfort,
But later more and more impediment,
And obstacle to fair development.

lxi. The potted rose was blessed with flower and thorn
And this portended conflicts in myself;
Through it I yearned for past of memory:
Save time's reverse, this couldn't be reborn.

lxii. I took my attitudes and views from then
And saw myself as innocent though grown,
I lived at odds with new realities
Cocooned, bound up, within my private world.

lxiii. Transported, I worshipped my potted rose
Advantages that came into the world,
So disadvantages, were fruit of it,
So pricking thorns, so fragrant roses red.

lxiv. With backward look my social graces failed,
Development was not in question now,
I took stagnation with idolatry
And that degree of innocence that's sham.

lxv. I never learnt to interact on terms
But as of old I just presented dumb
With youthful look upon my youthful face
Expecting others to initiate.

lxvi. And I avoided much social contact,
I kept my head below the radar's screen,
And persevered and shone in work at school,
And for whatever little that was worth.

lxvii. And seen by me at noon in light of day
I saw this world of me and potted rose
Was but pretend, a type of make believe,
But I persisted forced into this path.

lxviii. My life at home revolved round argument,
Polarity was stark and harsh at times,
A bristling state of tension was the norm,
And commonly erupted into worse.

lxix. My mother and her partner knew no shame
And screamed and raged before their own offspring,
Expecting them somehow to weather it
Or just ignore their animosity.

lxx. Increased woe drove me to my potted rose,
It wasn't hard to water it with tears,
And guard the fruit from others' jealously,
Fruit that I treasured, kept and made my own.

lxxi. Although I spoke of thorns of social grace
And though they held me back in spite of growth
Yet at this time there were advantages
That still arose from reifying past.

lxxii. Supplied with retrogressive innocence
Through concentrating on my golden age
My potted rose in flowers bore the fruit
That I was seen as likeable and cute.

lxxiii. And now the reason was recalled to me
Of why I loved the growth from out decay
That was my potted rose, as memories
Were reinforced by new experience.

lxxiv. There grew renewed association strong
Between myself, some teenage friends of mine
And those the self-same ones I'd known before,
In self-same city, as of golden age.

lxxv. It were as if my potted rose had worked
Some wonder in attempt to raise the past -
Though altered now the players and the place,
A reassembled similarity.

lxxvi. My mother and her partner's war on selves
Had not abated its ferocity:
His animosity towards myself
Fired by my teenage years, intensified.

lxxvii. With such a home environment in place
Myself was drawn by any loved option
That represented feelings like escape
Away from family antipathy.

lxxviii. And such an option was a brief return
To fond-remembered days of yesteryear,
To places, faces from the golden age,
A time I reified and doted on.

lxxix. The option was both staged and realised
First through attention to my potted rose,
And second through adored weekends away,
And during which no woe would rear its head.

lxxx. It was a confluence of dreamt and real
Which was as rare as centaur in a glade,
Repeat of dream I'd dreamt objectified,
This was an aim too high, a treat too good.

lxxxi. But then I drank with regularity
And in that company and in those days
This seemed the start of something grandiose,
But what were jests, for me were play with fire.

lxxxii. And then through drink I learnt a brazen pride,
One which contradicted, so too destroyed
The charms half way I'd gained from potted rose;
These drunken airs a curse on all that's good.

lxxxiii. Then though I mixed with those that were my age,
And though through them this seemed a waking dream
I still remained different to everyone,
I still maintained my potted rose with tears.

lxxxiv. And those around had *struggled with the heart*,
And through this *innocence and peace depart* -
And differently I'd struggled 'spite of heart
And thus maturity and sense depart.

lxxxv. The passing time allowed to reinforce
My stock of retrogressive tendencies
And when I reached the cusp of adulthood
As others looked forward, so I turned back.

lxxxvi. I still admired what was my golden age,
And gleaned my morals and my attitudes
Though not in whole (in part with poisonous grafts)
From those distant loved times of memory.

lxxxvii. The days displayed allowances of youth
And with that show, I sort of fitted in,
Like youthful platitude that finds a place
In learned discourse on more worldly things;

lxxxviii. Like green banana on a bunch that's ripe
I shared a class, though different attributes.
Like talk of seances that finds a place
In Yeats's otherwise maturer work.

lxxxix. And now although I didn't live at home
I lived a level off reality,
I lived a sheltered, pampered way of life,
A laboured fantasy in all but name.

xc. Such fantasy encouraged fantasy
And motivated backward look to past,
Above all other times of health this time
The one that laid the ground for indolence.

xci. Through retrogression my poor state decayed,
And still enamoured of my potted rose
I lost the lever to initiate,
I could not plan or start the large or small.

xcii. My conversation's void ability
Was marked by failure to instantiate,
I failed universal instance of self
(And was and am no master in small-talk).

xciii. This was repeat of tack I took in youth -
To but present myself and hope for grace,
I would converse (the same) with those I knew
Though novelty, however shown, foxed me.

xciv. The seed of difference waxed in me full strong:
Alienation from my peers was felt:
I shed few tears upon my potted rose,
My sacred plant but proffered thorn on thorn.

xcv. But still, against good sense some liked those thorns,
I knew not why and still can't see the grounds,
And thus I made some friends in spite of drink
And utter lack of readiness for life.

xcvi. But thorns they were and I replete with them,
I was unpleasant to engage or near,
Initially my friends forgave the prick:
Most shied through realising thorns grew thick.

xcvii. With adulthood my backward looking ways,
The attitudes and failing social stance
That went with fawning on my potted rose,
Became, to all intents, as things ingrained.
xcviii. For worse, outlook was coloured by a blind
Alcoholic's unconscious brazen pride:
Almost a pride in lack of social grace,
Almost perverse, a boast to cause offence.
xcix. And thus I navigated on through life
And on through three unthinking marriages
A parody of man I drifted far
From reason's shores and all their certain sense.
c. I still can't disentangle potted rose,
Alcohol and madness to separate strands:
Through life they have remained triumvirate
Dictatorship which had no weal in mind.
ci. And what connects these three to make a prile?
In each stands forth a difference from the crowd;
Each one alienates those who know it,
Until they stand alone, too from themselves.
cii. Eventually these three created woe
Which turned my heart to stone and banished joy:
And it was like my thoughts were dead to life,
My corpse endured, a fane to absent soul.
ciii. And as my heart was stone I wept no more,
My potted rose ran dry of tears and died,
Without a single verdant shoot or bud:
A dry as dust, withered display of thorns.
civ. Eventually I turned antisocial,
Though it was flavoured by desires of old:
I still would wish for others' company
Despite the glaring fact that mine repelled.
cv. It would have made some sense to just withdraw,
Though golden age's farcical desire
To be the cynosure spurred onward to
Repeat and failed attempts to interact.
cvi. Though there were times of joy in adult life
But just that I'd always compare them to
The innocent delights of youthful life
And not comparing like with like, they'd fail.
cvii. Sure, there were wells of light in adult life
But like all joy beyond a certain age
The pleasure only showed in looking back
With no more here and now, joys just recalled.
cviii. And then I still adored my potted rose,
A lifeless plant fed by a rotting head,
It will not come as greatest kept surprise
Now rose nor adulthood I idolise.

cix. And most through potted rose I find I'm left
With lack of social grace and niceties:
I'm not antisocial but see myself
Asocial, said for want of better word.

cx. And these difficulties, as seen by me,
Are counterbalanced by innate talents
(Buried talents - if so, a sin to hide)
That I somehow imagine I possess.

cxi. I thought my failings were not obvious,
I thought the cause was that I felt awkward
A fact that went undetected by most,
But to assume as thus was to be wrong.

cxii. What stands out now (and should have always done)
Is that I stand as different from the rest
And that through my attachment (dear it is)
To potted rose and all that this includes.

cxiii. One time discussing aired hypothesis
That I'm antisocial in way and form
A friend surprised me with his apt reply:
"You're not, you just can't buy things from a shop."

cxiv. And it's a fine and true analysis:
I make no small-talk when I'm buying things,
And too I fail in smiles and eye contact,
I fail to put the man and me at ease.

cxv. Importantly this failing stands noticed
And is not seen as innocence or void:
Asocial lack is seen as lack of clothes -
Is seen a nakedness which screams offence.

cxvi. From his simple comment, I reassessed,
It served as catalyst for change of views
And new analysis of self and state:
This change remains as undergoing change.

cxvii. The alteration was not sudden change,
Simply, I kept returning to that said,
I could not deny what seemed plain logic,
Unable just to shift the thought from mind.

cxviii. At first I did not dwell upon effects,
Or those consequences that might follow,
But rolled the idea round about my head,
And thus when it recurred I toyed with it.

cxix. And with repeated thought revolving thus,
It dawned on me the need to jettison
My now defunct dejected potted rose,
And it's with pains I've made a start on this.

cxx. The future may bring joy, this much I pray:
As I'm the thief as much as anyone
I hope I will not say: "*O cruelty*,
To steal my potted rose *away from me!*"

cxxi. The whole as example of some life lie -
Perhaps not as life lie serves some purpose
In simplifying things and not reverse,
And abrogates responsibility.

cxxii. The stock life lie's a private source of ease
So long as it remains beyond challenge:
So yes, perhaps this was my potted rose,
Life lie, that fault which almost all possess.

cxxiii. Yet it would come as no surprise to me
If to exist without this strange life lie
Were not some form of blessing overdue,
Which paid to me would simplify my ways.

cxxiv. The crux is thus: for more than one decade
I've taken stance, pretending to myself
That I'm possessed of average social grace;
I find I'm not: what chance acquiring it?

cxxv. Ignore the size of chance, the chance is there:
In days gone by I had my potted rose
And that prevented me from hoping to
Repair this grave social impediment.

cxxvi. The realignment, urge to reassess,
And view the matters in the light of day,
Is new to me, has waxed to certainty
With passage through the days of last few months.

cxxvii. And there has been some minor progress made:
In light of what my friend had said to me
The patois of the shop or store's exchange
Is studied, and I feel I make small steps.

cxxviii. In some small sense I've found the aptitude
To direct conversation as I wish:
This skill is new to me, and though I know
Those well and they allow, somehow I've gained.

cxxix. The aim is grand, I'm starting from low base:
And thus a simple forward step looms great -
My tale of shops' patois may seem naive,
But to me it's a victory of kinds.

cxxx. My object's high, I'm starting at an age:
I must use reason well, for others it's
Reflexive - it's no matter, if achieved,
The end result of social grace, the same.

cxxxi. The prize obscured, I might be autistic:
So what if there are obstacles ahead,
I wish at least to say that I have tried,
I wish to test myself on even par.

cxxxii. Regardless, if achieved or out of reach
I yearn and aim for this accomplishment,
For others it's a given, yet to me
A feather in the cap of normalcy.

cxxxiii. The incomplete initial part of this
Preceding book was written in the year
1812, *at Stowey*, delightful place,
A part of *Somerset* (here I may jest).
cxxxiv. The second part was written on return
From *Germany* on or about the year
1815 at *Keswick*, *Cumberland*,
With scar and fell and lake inspiring me.
cxxxv. Were book complete at either former times,
Or even if the first and second parts
Had been published around 1815,
Original impression were more great.
cxxxvi. For this omission there's only my own
Poor indolence to blame, and at a time
As rich as ours in soaring ideas,
Not to publish is but to hinder self.
cxxxvii. The dates are mentioned here exclusively
For that purpose as to preclude the charge
Of plagiary, that wrong to rob from kind;
Or like in crime, servile imitation.
cxxxviii. There seem to be amongst us grouped critics
Who hold belief that each image and thought
Is but traditional, in new they see
Simple repetition of standard themes.
cxxxix. These same critics have no notion, can't grasp
The simple fact, of fountains in the world,
And small as well as great, the origin
Of thought however it may flow from there.
cxl. They would therefore in charity derive
Every the rill that they behold to flow
As coming from a perforation made
In tank belonging to another man.
cxli. As far as my preceding book's concerned,
The celebrated poet whose efforts
I might remain suspected to have read
And imitated, would sure vindicate.
cxlii. Regarding this preceding Book (Book VIII),
The recognised dead poet whose sound verse
I stand suspected now as having learned
And imitated, would not raise a brow.
cxliii. As for the matter of my potted rose,
A greeting, celebrated poet, please
You would permit me to address to you,
Monkish Latin restyled to doggerel:
cxliv. *The thing belongs to me, is likewise yours:*
If this my mode of thinking won't suffice,
Let it be mine, good friend, I bear on you,
Because I am the poorer of the two.

BOOK IX – FRIENDLESSNESS

i. He didn't make connections that are clear
Between imperialism and war,
To talk to him you'd think he thought the two
Were separate entities, one justified.

ii. *I cannot understand his point of view*
It seems he does not mean the things he says,
His stance is ludicrous, a source of fun
If it's indeed the case he's serious.

iii. The only thing I think, is that he's mad,
A camel short of forming caravan,
He cannot claim a left-wing attitude
And show no opposition to the war.

iv. *It's like a green who votes for industry,*
A plain hypocrisy is brought to mind,
It seems as if he lacks the consciousness
That you and I have won with graft and slog.

v. It's like a pacifist who votes for war,
A virgin screwing for virginity,
A unionist who wants his wage controlled,
A socialist who takes his boss's side.

vi. *And I suppose you're right to put him down*
His attitude's effete and laughable,
He's claiming bold as brass that black is white
Next he may state the world knows liberty.

vii. And if I felt the touch of charity
I'd say we're dealing with an idiot,
Someone whose comprehension does prevent,
Someone who needs experience of life.

viii. *I've seen his stuffing bursting at the seams,*
It shows his brains and sure he's losing them,
Your charity might make some sense of it
Perhaps at heart he's just a common fool.

ix. It's not a case of dealing with the sane,
The contradictions glare in any light,
In such a way he lacks lucidity,
He even takes no note of ridicule.

x. *I catch your drift, perhaps he's lost the plot,*
Perhaps the causal ground's organic here,
And that's the reason he's reactionary,
Plays dumb regarding such a simple point.

xi. In truth I'll say, the man must be a loon,
There's not a choice of ways to think of it,
There's not another reason could explain
His total lack of any common sense.

xii. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
Perhaps to others, source of merriment,
I hide my glimmer and I'm ignorant.

xiii. I must have said it time and time again
It is impossible he can't of heard
If I was wishing to repeat myself
I'd try to find some job which paid me to.

xiv. *He seemed a little slow, I'll give you that,*
Perhaps he tried to make a point in jest;
Though I've suggested that, I have to say,
That any point he made was lost on me.

xv. A point? If repetition were a point
Then yes the man conversed and more than most ...
To talk like that the only reason known,
That springs to mind, is that he's barking mad.

xvi. *I wouldn't tar and feather him just yet,*
There might be reason for the things he said,
Maybe he has interest in what you say,
Things over and above what's plain to see.

xvii. Motives ulterior! Don't make me laugh!
There's next to nothing strange in what I said,
Why would he want what's normal on repeat,
Why ask again when there's no reason to?

xviii. *I'm starting now to see your point of view,*
It was quite normal what you chose to say,
It's just he forced you to reiterate
And that without the slightest hint of cause.

xix. The cause: the fact that he is barking mad;
If I were to converse with idiots
I'd find myself a place where they are helped
And salve my conscience giving aid to them.

xx. But as I try just getting by in life
And I am not a psychiatric nurse,
I can expect the company I keep
Stays free of cognitive deficiencies.

xxi. *You're hard on him and I'm not sure it's fair,*
Why don't you cut the man a bit of slack,
It's not as if he caused direct offence
It's more by oversight if anything.

xxii. Maybe you're right, I'm being hard on him,
Perhaps he didn't hear, perhaps he's deaf,
And what is likely, that he's not on form,
It's everyone can have unpleasant days.

xxiii. *Just take it with a generous pinch of salt,*
Take little notice of offence he's caused -
Next time I'd wager it goes differently,
Next time perhaps he might apologise.

xxiv. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
I have a memory that's like a sieve
Expressed another way - inattentive.

xxv. For half an hour he didn't say a word
Refused to utter anything at all,
A vow of silence might explain the fact
If you ignored few words he'd spoke before.

xxvi. *More like someone removed his frontal lobes*
To listen saying nothing shows a want
Of common decency, the man was lost,
He didn't even nod approvingly.

xxvii. Perhaps just like you say, the man was lost
Maybe he found himself beyond his depth,
Ignoring any explanations made
He seemed confused what powers of speech are for.

xxviii. *How can it be that he's beyond his depth?*
We talked of actors and of actresses
Their fame precedes the mention of their name
He'd have to live a well secluded life.

xxix. You'd be surprised, there's some that isolate,
But nonetheless the conversation moved:
He didn't move with it - he stayed silent -
Much like a nodding dog that didn't nod.

xxx. *He must be out his depth on everything*
It's that or there is something wrong with him
I'm sure someone's removed his frontal lobes
That or an accident has hurt his head.

xxxi. They say that he was married more than once
I wonder what on earth he said to them
He must have said a word or two at least
To make them think that he was suitable.

xxxii. *He'd have to win the lottery for me,*
There's something to be said for silent types
But those that have superiority
And not the one's appearing scared to talk.

xxxiii. I'm lost in looking for the sense of it,
We started chatting, he conversed with us,
He spoke of university and books
But at one point he simply shut his mouth.

xxxiv. *My world is best without the likes of him*
The end effect is talking to a wall,
I'd get more sense communing with my plants,
More conversation from a plank of wood.

xxxv. And I suppose you're right to criticise,
He is to blame, it sounds ridiculous
But he should simply learn to say something
Instead of making others feel awkward.

xxxvi. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
If simple reason's not impertinence
I cause offence, moreover, through silence.

xxxvii. That metaphor he gave, a slip of tongue,
Revealing what was really on his mind,
It showed a certain want of grace and charm
To marry normal words with gutter filth.

xxxviii. *I think I know the turn of phrase you mean*
And I'd agree that it's beyond the pale,
You'd wonder where he learnt to talk like that
He delved to depths I've seldom seen explored.

xxxix. His words were like the unexpected form
Which floats below the wave at Brighton Pier
And waits, surprising guests who come to swim,
Just catching sight's enough to wreck the day.

xl. *Comparison to piece of excrement,*
Beware! you are almost on his level,
I see the argument you're making out
But watch the pot that calls the kettle black.

xli. OK, his words were like a shower of rain
That falls some summers day when it is warm
And spoils the joy of summer shine for all,
And wets and dampens fun that's to be had.

xlii. *So you can be both fair and foul to him*
I can't see why you come across upset,
You're not a stranger to obscenities,
So what's the line dividing you from him?

xliii. There are a million ways to look at it,
To start with, what's intended sheds a light:
The times I swear I'm meaning to offend,
He's not aware of words that leave his mouth.

xliv. *If I agree with that, it would follow*
That an insult meant causes less offence;
Somehow if it intends to break a bone
The end result is less insult not more.

xlv. Almost, but try to think of reasons first,
I know when I'll offend, I am aware,
And that will make me shut my mouth at times,
He'll just ignore all sense of tact and grace.

xlvi. *Yes, saying that, I see your point of view*
The worse remained outside of what he said,
It was complete and total lack of tact
That put the fancy icing on the cake.

xlvii. And what he said was better left unsaid
And furthermore, I'm not sure, but I think,
He didn't quite intend to cause offence,
Although I'd easily be wrong on that.

xlviii. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
I'd like to learn to be more moderate,
As I present as inappropriate.

xlix. You'll be my witness, how he spoke of Dan,
You'd think him judge and jury on the world,
You'd think he was a perfect specimen
To hear him putting down poor Dan like that.

l. *I wasn't ever introduced to Dan*
But I mistrust when someone vents their spleen,
Such words reflect more on the one who speaks
Than paint a picture of the man described.

li. I know the Dan that he lashed out against
And you're quite right not trusting what he said
In what he's stating he exaggerates,
That, if indeed, he doesn't tell a lie.

lii. *I'd speak like that of my worst enemy*
And on a day I wasn't mincing words,
Dan must have heavily offended him
For him to speak with such acidity.

liii. The way you say those things, I get confused,
It's just I thought that he and Dan were friends,
I know Dan's done him favours in the past
And has defended him against himself.

liv. *If that's the case I don't know what to think,*
And if he talks like that about his friends
What slander would he make of you or me,
When this was shown and with friendship's restraint.

lv. It's fair to say he's acted otherwise,
He has repaid some favours owed to Dan,
But saying that it doesn't grant the right
To run Dan down the way he did just then.

lvi. *And I would say he hasn't got the right!*
If someone chose to speak of me like that
Without a reason (something I had said)
It wouldn't rest so easily with me.

lvii. I know you thought him harsh but in this case
He didn't say a thing that's new to me;
We know he's got some problems with his soul
Perhaps they flare with waxing of the moon.

lviii. *I can't but like you for your charity:*
It could have been a symptom or a sign,
But still my generosity extends
Towards the one who's wronged in this: to Dan.

lix. Dan's in the right, offence is in the wrong:
But ask the same next week of him who wronged,
You'd get a different answer, that is clear:
And if he did I'd put it down to drink.

lx. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
I try to stifle what I learnt early:
Against my better side - derogatory.

lxi. And did you notice how he changed the gist
Of conversation time and time again
And chose to speak of his experience
When what we talked of dealt with something else.

lxii. *Sure, yes, I talked about when I was raised*
And had explained how hard it was at school
He took no notice launching some tirade
Of troubles he had known when he was young.

lxiii. You'd think he chased the prize for worst of woes,
And made his aim to trump what you had said;
Such thoughts leave conversation in the lurch,
He doesn't give, he's trying to compete.

lxiv. *Competing, that's exactly where he's at,*
I was explaining that daily hardship
That made my life become a misery,
And he explained his woes as worse than mine.

lxv. If ten are murdered in North Africa
The fact that ten have parted from this life
Does not deprive a single death at home
Of what it is - an awful tragedy.

lxvi. *The conversation didn't deal with him*
It's not for him to turn the thing around
How would things stand were we to speak divorce
Is his the worst that people ever saw?

lxvii. Exactly for that given reason there
I wouldn't like to talk with him on that,
In fact there's many themes I would avoid
Because of what he'd find utmost in mind.

lxviii. *He said the same on disability*
Ask Anne, she said to me the other day,
He tried to say he suffered worse than most
Despite the fact he's in remission now.

lxix. It all relates to him and him alone,
I'd say he's wearing mirrored spectacles
Reflecting only his view of himself,
He lives a world devoid of others' views.

lxx. *Described that way I might well pity him,*
Perhaps his failing is beyond control,
He might not wish to act as bad as that,
If someone took the time to talk to him ... ?

lxxi. I'd save your pity, that man loves himself
Maybe expressed in little roundabouts
But that's the cause of it and he won't change,
You'd better leave him talking to himself.

lxxii. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
Perhaps I need to give myself a kick
I refer to I, I'm egocentric.

lxxiii. I've never heard a play list that's so short,
If repetition gained a loving prize
Then he would rule his harem well and good,
And everyone would bow to things said thrice.

lxxiv. *OK, so he repeats himself at times,*
And I'd not join his harem, there you're right,
We've all been known to tell a story twice
Is he not just the same as you and me?

lxxv. The major difference is that things moved on,
We talked of what was in the news this week,
And though he may have had a point at first
His boring replays hindered what we said.

lxxvi. *Oh, interfered with what you said, poor thing,*
You talk enough to make a donkey lame,
And you are hindered as you spout hot air,
Perhaps you'd like to register complaint?

lxxvii. Whoa, I don't need to take these jibes from you,
Remember that we speak of him not me
I know it's easier for you to turn
On lucidness, but he was being lame.

lxxviii. *I know I shouldn't be attacking you,*
Apologies, but I can't see the wrong
In saying something over and again
If that's the contribution he can make.

lxxix. That's just the point, ask what he contributes,
If it's the case there's nothing he can say
Then he should keep a buttoned lip on it,
Not interrupt at times he's out his depth.

lxxx. *Because he doesn't know so much as some*
You're of the view that he should shut his mouth,
To talk about democracy with you
Is likely talking votes to autocrats.

lxxxi. You take his side on that as well I see,
He knew one fact and that was all he knew,
Then gave it parrot fashion from his beak
Despite the fact the conversation moved.

lxxxii. *I've seen your conversation plunge and die,*
Perhaps a little less the monologue,
And introduce some dialogue, and then,
You just might find a place for what he said.

lxxxiii. Tosh, it is clear he didn't know a thing,
He didn't understand the first of it,
To talk to him you'd think the world was flat
And that's how far he grasps reality.

lxxxiv. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
Through idleness my former stronghold's stormed,
The end result is that I'm uninformed.

lxxxv. Now there's a man needs putting in his place
If it's not me, there's many others would;
And that reaction comes as guaranteed -
He only needs to talk like that again.

lxxxvi. *It made me laugh to lead him on like that,*
He wasn't certain when he started out
But I encouraged him with what I said,
Agreed with him to make him lose the plot.

lxxxvii. It's not a laughing matter, things like that,
You should be careful what you say to him,
I think the man's a nutter, just watch out
I've seen things evener than this go wrong.

lxxxviii. *Come on! it's just a bit of harmless sport*
The man is thinking that he's got some class
When it's as clear as day he's doolally,
I am allowed to have some fun and games.

lxxxix. No one would want to stop you playing games
And it's not hard to see your sport in it
It's just I'd like to tell him plain and clear
And not for you to go and egg him on.

xc. *Do that and you're just spoiling all the fun*
When he was buying what I said to him,
He lapped it up and took in every word
The man was thinking that I thought him smart.

xci. The man's a idiot and you'd agree
And for some reason I don't understand
He seems to think he's better placed to judge
And set the world to rights when he's just nuts.

xcii. *You start to see the whole beauty in it:*
The lunatic who's better than the world,
The man who'll sort anybody's problem
The man who's not at home in his own head.

xciii. I am half seeing what you're getting at
It's funny in a twisted sort of way,
I'm meaning funny strange and not ha ha,
With that, I'd save my laughs for comedy.

xciv. *Trust me, he could be on the telly him,*
He hasn't got a clue, and still looks down
His nose as if he were some kind of lord:
The whole of it is comedy to me.

xcv. And if it makes you laugh, then more's the fun,
Though if you get your joy from lunatics
Watch yourself that you're not on their level,
Beware you're not too close for comfort's sake.

xcvi. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
And fair compared I am inferior,
Why do I feign to be superior?

xcvii. And who was he to say who'll save the earth,
To list environmental damage caused
By others, he's no eco-warrior
It's just the case he's on restricted means;
xcviii. *But saying that his arguments aren't flawed,*
You can't deny that you and I drive cars
And that he doesn't, not consuming oil;
It is a simple fact you can't get round.
xcix. Environmental reasons, my fat arse,
The only reason that he doesn't drive
Is that he hasn't passed his driving test
And that he has been drunk for twenty years.
c. *Then wrong just motivates him towards right,*
You should be kind enough to give him that;
If everybody used public transport
The end result reduces greenhouse gas.
ci. OK, it's for the good he doesn't drive,
That hardly means he's got the given right
To ram his trite opinions down my throat
And say he's better than the rest of us.
cii. *You're on a loser there - he's got a point;*
There's many driving cars and voting Green,
There'd be a change if people didn't drive,
Although I'm not the one to give it up.
ciii. I'm going to have to repeat myself
It's just the case he's on restricted means;
I need my car for work - there is no bus,
I need my car to take the kids to school.
civ. *And then we need to pump those million tonnes*
Of CO2 into the atmosphere;
Ignoring reasons, still he doesn't drive,
If all could manage that, then for the best.
cv. And so, if we were poor, there'd be less cars;
He's some model of inactivity;
And that which goes for him won't go for me;
And it annoys me that he says it will.
cvi. *I'm in two minds, he did get self-assured,*
But still I'd like to think you can compare,
Perhaps you're right in saying that you can't,
If that's the case he shouldn't praise himself.
cvii. And that's the thing in it that I dislike,
You can't compare and that is what he does
And makes it out that I am worse than him
And claims the moral high ground when he's wrong.
cviii. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
My thoughts can stray and get both vacuous
And grandiose, I turn presumptuous.

cix. He wore a wedding ring, God bless her soul,
I pity his poor wife, how he won her
I'll never know, and if she gave her heart
I know the words she'll use if wiser now:

cx. She would he send her long strayed eyes to her
That (Oh) too long have dwelt on him; yet since
They learned such odd fashions and false passions,
Are made no good for sight, him keep them still.

cxi. She would he send her harmless heart again
Which no unworthy thought could stain; but if
He's taught it to make jest of her protest,
And cross both word and oath, him keep it still.

cxii. Yet she would have sent back her heart and eyes
That she may know and see his lies; and laugh,
And joy, when he's in anguish, languishes
For one who'll prove as strange as he is now.

cxiii. *I pity her 'n' all, the meaning changed*
She is self traitor bringing spider love,
And with it transubstantiating all,
And converting sweetest manna to gall.

cxiv. You took the words right out my mouth on that,
You never know just where you are with love,
I know you fall for who you fall, but that!
Returning to his wife I know it's said:

cxv. That as all individual souls contain
An admixture of things, they know not what,
So then love, these mixed souls, doth mix again,
And makes from both the one, each this and that.

cxvi. As with a single violet transplant,
As with the strength, the colour, and the size,
(The each of which before was poor, and scant)
Which then redoubles still, and multiplies.

cxvii. And then when love, with one another so
Interinanimates those separate souls
That abler soul which out of that doth flow,
Any defects of loneliness controls.

cxviii. You'd get defectiveness to know his soul,
The union bred would be one fringed with odd,
Perhaps he's got a hidden point or two
That said I still have pity on his wife.

cxix. *I'll say, the man is odd, the man is strange,*
He's like a peg that doesn't fit a hole,
But saying that and having looked I'll swear
Nowhere exists a man who's true and fair.

cxx. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
And these subtle differences may be feared,
Idiosyncrasies are marked as weird.

cxxi. And he suggests a cure for every ill,
It's like he stood above and held the scales
And knew the right and wrong of everyone
And made pronouncements large and small alike.

cxxii. *I'm kind of seeing what you're getting at*
But doesn't everybody try to solve,
Attempt to lighten, other people's woes:
He isn't doing more than you or me.

cxxiii. Yeah, but I see the matter differently,
When you and I go offering advice
We're on a level, he is looking down,
It's attitude that marks him off from us.

cxxiv. *You're more persuasive of the two of us,*
He has the right to offer his advice,
But shouldn't dish it out as Moses did;
As if he's even sorted his own life!

cxxv. The same as anyone and everyone
He's got the granted right to criticise
But not along the lines of lord and serf,
Not with his elevated attitude.

cxxvi. *He does the same as you or me would do*
Although in doing it another way
He always manages to cause offence
Where you or me evoke some sympathy.

cxxvii. That, and the way he puts himself across,
I don't know which one's worse, his attitude,
Or what he says, and though I'm hating both,
The former and the latter must be linked.

cxxviii. *But saying that there have been times at which*
We've all promoted selves (with lager's stars)
Above our station and at times were full
Of condescension for the world at large.

cxxix. Then I would let him off the hook a bit,
I thought the man was only drinking coke,
Although perhaps he'd had a drink or two
Though that just means he doesn't mix with beer.

cxxx. *No, he's teetotal, he was drinking coke,*
Regardless, you and I have been that bad,
And grant him sober what you're granted drunk:
A willingness to see things differently.

cxxxi. I never get as bad as than when drunk,
The thing is his superiority,
His readiness to say what's for the best
When it is clear he doesn't understand.

cxxxii. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
And I should think those thoughts that fit my size
And in my state I mustn't patronise.

cxxxiii. He didn't have to ask me more than once,
He knew the subject was a tender one,
He must have known I would become upset,
He must have known exactly what he said.

cxxxiv. *Before you send him down without a trial*
Remember he's a step below perfect,
And just as you and me he has his faults
Although, he has perhaps more grounds than most.

cxxxv. 'He has perhaps more grounds', I disagree,
Put straight, if you converse in company
There is a book of rules to be obeyed
By everyone partaking, not just some.

cxxxvi. *I've known him years, it's just the way he is,*
You shouldn't take offence from simple things
Where none is meant, he doesn't do these things
Intending any injury to you.

cxxxvii. No one except you and your loyalties
Would care the slightest hoot about intent,
The man offended me, he chose a theme
He knew was touchy, went and steamrollered.

cxxxviii. *If that's the light you want to put it in -*
The man and social skills are misnomers,
And it's for you to realise the fact
And show a little sympathy to him.

cxxxix. He gets sympathy on apology:
My enemy would turn the knife like that,
He shouldn't mould social conversation
To an analysis of my sore points.

cxl. *I have defended him as much I can,*
I have to say that he's offended you,
I guess it's just I'm used to it myself
And you are in the right to be outraged.

cxli. And that I am, but what's the man's motive?
Why's he deliver such unpleasantness?
Where is the reason for his lack of grace
And what's the ground he chose to pick on me?

cxlii. *I've said I'd like to be inside his head*
(Although I'll put my turns of speech aside)
I think I know the reasons for his lapse
That doesn't mean I'm able to explain.

cxliii. It makes no sense to me, how can someone
Ignore a person's feelings just like that,
You'd think it open season on my hurt
Or that he has a total lack of tact.

cxliv. Were they to need to talk, they might talk thus,
And pose the question what my motives are;
This learnt so young that it's almost passive
Against my better will - insensitive.

BOOK X – AFFECTATIONS OF LOVE

i. My love, I would not show this verse to thee,
Though not for wanting to advance my cause,
But as, all heart's wishes, bar one's, close yours,
I'd bow to you and ask my privacy.
So these, the words ne'er given you from me,
And were they sent, in modesty I'd pause,
But thus you leave me with an open clause
To praise your charms unto eternity.
So let me say that I am fond of you.
Exactly why, I neither know nor care.
Suffice to say a fondness of the heart.
Where on spectrum's fan? Platonic in hue.
Below sweet nothings is the normal share
That Cupid grants with asymmetric dart.

ii. And if my words had her as their subject,
They'd deafen her to whom they are addressed
Because in spite of all, she's not possessed
Of will to hear from those whom love has wrecked.
It's not that she declines the ones abject,
But she's content in her delightful West
Nor cares to have her East's youth repossessed
And that because her heart's home lies perfect.
And should my verse approach with its ardour,
My rags of worth, associating thus,
With her pure heart, would form a dissonance;
What reason for a change of demeanour
To one accepting negative as plus
When she's already found her resonance.

iii. And she would shy were she to know I wrote
And she would blush at honest love declared,
Just like suspicious fox would not be snared,
Although I do not trap, I write and note.
It's fair to say I stay too young to dote,
And thus my love from slavish wants is spared,
And she should feel no shame to be compared
To ever constant love which conquers rote.
The compliment - the mildest yoke to bear -
And yet perhaps in this she sees deceit
Or senses things whose shades she would not see.
I will ignore this ban, and say she's fair
A beauty tip to toe, from head to feet,
And offer her a height's simplicity.

iv. And were I worthy words to whisper her
They'd fail in worth allowed in her address,
They would fall short and she should seek redress,
The words would miss perfection and would err.
Before love's first template I but falter,
And shown the universal I'm the less.
Can I compare the model that's peerless?
Language can only fail or else alter.
And thus revealed are worlds on worlds of worth,
And with the first I needs presume her ear,
And was this won my words need lack all flaws,
And could I overcome my spoken dearth,
The third of worlds is barred as needs her hear
The plea of one without deserving cause.

v. I would not wish for fear that want might breed
An imperfection in your heart's pure glaze
(Its gloss as sleek as ermine pelt displays)
Whose surface mirrors depths of measured deed.
And thus your heart should hear, not glance, my reed,
And need not know to you I give the bays,
Whilst manifold discovered pearls amaze
And prove your heart of finest fruit the seed.
Fair nature needn't praise the botanist
Who but depicts, recording form and mass,
May miss the inner worth that parts reveal;
Admiring specimens, no scientist
Would eat the peach that represents the class:
And thus I would not wish for my ideal.

vi. In all this time I've wondered how you were
I've never doubted that you live and thrive
In some well suited fashion and derive
The best of now, not needing to defer.
I knew I'd never need a raconteur
To tell you're steeped in joy to be alive,
Succeed in bliss where others only strive,
Your grace emits self-satisfaction's purr.
Comparing this content with what I know
My life's effort appears untenable,
You beauty, me the unforgiven beast;
With my objectives seen by you as low,
And yours remaining unattainable,
You'd represent the most, and I the least.

vii. Were drop of rain to see the printed page
And wonder at the ordered black and white,
But know the magic that is ink and type
Would smear if water trod upon its stage,
Would print enamoured drop decline its wage
And wish that it were dry so then it might
Partake of print without performing slight;
Would dry rain usher in another age?
So could I cast my love to such a mould
And trace my self-negation's asymptote,
Approaching none to add yet not to one?
I fear the feat can but be thought and told,
And trying would not even gain your vote,
Negation lacks an element of fun.

viii. And from my heart I wring these lines to time,
Graffiti's scrawl is all that you would see;
To scratch into the wall, the way I do,
Disjointed verse, were in itself a crime;
To add insult to injury my rhyme
Attempts to sketch perfection, and would woo
When difference bars; these failings, one and two,
Should thus constrain my art to static mime:
I'd be a statue of a man who dives
Into the river of forgetfulness,
And I would seek Lethe, my eyes half closed,
A mind's cool dearth of beeless winter hives,
Prepared to leap, my face expressionless,
Heart torn between what's know and what's supposed.

ix. Were I the strangest veg the world could grow
It would transpire that you were carnivore,
Although you would become a herbivore
If I were changed to Russian sturgeon's roe.
But I am not a caviar and so
Do neither tempt nor hold a worth in store;
I fear that you remain an omnivore
Without a taste for my rich stock of woe.
Although my love ignores your appetite
And shop's discarded goods still bear a price
However many times they've been marked down,
And only as it isn't fair or right
To gift a heart in trade as strands don't splice;
Though still I give you mine to make you frown.

x. And if the case falls out that you and me
Remain the last survivors of a war,
Both radiated, yet maintaining store,
Perhaps I'd show these lines of prosody
And yet preserve my anonymity
By saying that I knew the lines were poor
And claim I knew the author and his flaw,
That he addressed some belle of history.
A true oblivion, and love's reprieve -
H-bombs, shock waves, the apple of my eye -
For one of Dylan's they prepare the ground:
If jesting 'Let's go play Adam and Eve'
I'd be obliged to prompt you your reply:
'No thanks - just look what happened last time round'.

xi. A veil of innocence, a bubbling rill,
This playful stream completes a wealth of charms,
And who'd deny soft spoken claims for balms
When they are coyly intimated still.
My veil of innocence, a different pill,
Akin to ignorance, the kind which harms
Both me and those enfolded in my arms
Through play of what would seem a stunted will.
And thus a mismatch of naivety:
Whatever latitude, whatever show,
Sweetness would but invite my bitterness;
Together, incompatibility;
I'd gift, a gain: you'd gift, increase of woe;
Such difference must preclude a happiness.

xii. When God was granting gifts to chosen fair
He put a piece of glitter in your eye
The such as sparkles (star that lights the sky)
And with its glint suggests both charm and flair;
That spark at first reducing unaware
To putty, those who happen to but spy;
A beam or fire, the glowing rays belie
Perfection of the God that gifted flare.
And psychopharmaca induces glaze
And makes my eyes expressionless and dumb,
And though my heart is grasped in rapture's fits
You'd think me brain dead from my vacant gaze
That seems to say that every nerve is numb;
It can't make sense to join such opposites.

xiii. And I have known you dress with end effect
Of an Athena from the head of Zeus:
She fit for war - you only letting loose
Untamed desires which you alone direct;
And every stitch and fold and line, perfect,
You colour what you wear, mauves, blues or puce,
The blending borders merge, a melting mousse
Delighting palate, textured and select.
Dare I aspire to splendour such as this
When fashion's blaze intimidates and cows
A soul which was at times acclimatised
But now through hardship finds itself remiss
In duties paid to beauty, it avows?
I set myself to suffer tantalised.

xiv. And anyone who thinks a smile a smile
Need learn the variations in a set
That mark the pearl from ebony and jet,
Divide exception from the rank and file.
This learnt then learn objective facts are vile
Beside subjective feelings which, well met,
Convert a gall to manna, bounties net,
And add new worlds of worth which then beguile.
In this my love so strong that I'd regard
Objective tokens wholly by the by
And listen to the music of my heart:
Such smile echoes the strains sung by the bard
And speaks of love as words can only try
Each nuance used to sharpen Cupid's dart.

xv. Some mixtures of qualities do not fit:
Valour and patience, nous and bookishness;
Although I've known one combination bless:
A woman's beauty merged with biting wit.
And having seen this blend of fired spirit
Exalted with feminine gracefulness
The other tigers roar but seem toothless,
Impressive, their tinsel can but flit.
To captivate attention with her looks,
And then to entertain with quips and wiles,
To silence one with glance or turn of phrase,
Encourage others, drawing as on hooks,
To conquer hearts and minds with sense and smiles;
Two faculties rolled into one amaze.

xvi. And talking of familiarity
With love and its geography and rules
Mine is a darkness lit by scattered gules,
Yours light, equal to your maturity.
And any join of day and night might see
The day eclipsed, its light turned blackened pools,
Or night banished, its cohort blinded fools;
Could opposites become a unity?
Despite my love I'd say the answer's no:
Such merger asks negation, me or you,
And I'd not love a frog from kissed princess.
It fails through me, so let my gules still glow,
I'll love what's bright and from my shade I'll rue
That matched I'd make our light to lifelessness.

xvii. And were your pity for me currency
(Monetary, not that which lets me live)
Your generosity would yearn to give
And still you'd not expend your treasury;
You'd buy whatever jewels and finery
Would add to making hearts competitive;
Sort pain and pleasure through luxury's sieve
And sift from silt the grain of harmony.
But gifts of heart are only golden dreams;
Your pity soothes but then exacerbates,
The fateful causes that produced it first.
Although it might dislodge supporting beams
You would be harsh but true, whose pity waits,
Until I gain a grace or fall, self cursed.

xviii. And that which strikes before all else is joy:
Although a thousand drinkers drink a drink
You'd be the one to glow as glasses clink
And gain the simple pleasure and enjoy.
You'd see the beauty in all, nought would cloy,
Not just in alcohol and in the pink,
But little things, a smile, a friendly wink:
Rote and your glitter forge a gold alloy.
And were this *joie de vivre* matched by me
I'd also laugh and play and raise my glass
But sadly joy and woe don't intertwine;
I think my existential misery
Must relegate me to a lower class:
You'd be the pearls, I'd have to be the swine.

xix. Classification that's necessary
Is elemental, with me my own pyre:
I am the water that wants to be fire
And if I can't, I'll seek affinity.
I want and crave impossibility,
The opposite is object of desire,
You are the fire to whose love I aspire:
To me (before all else) contradictory.
My love might say that opposites attract,
My sense would talk of fire and water mixed,
And sense ignored I'd listen to my heart
And try arranging fire and water's pact,
And when it's obvious that can't be fixed
I would proceed to burn, and love the smart.

xx. Shall I compare thee to the break of day?
Thou show more truthful promise, art more fair:
Some evil omens taint the hues dawns wear,
And daybreak is dispersed by constant ray:
Sometimes the eye of heav'n, hid from display,
And oft alone without combining flair:
And every gleam of beauty must despair,
To accident or time a due must pay.
But thy eternal splendour shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of thy grace and charms;
Nor shall Death boast a shaded ownership,
As thou, imagination's sphere, parade;
With each that reads and reading thought disarms,
A planted kiss upon thy living lip.

xxi. And if you granted me an audience
My nerves would get the better side of me
And I would anguish over company
The joy of which should banish reticence.
And would this angst be mark of deference?
Or be the fear of love, the fear of she
Who holds my heart in perpetuity
And whose desired dominion withers sense?
The fear is neither: I compare myself
With that which was, the flourish of the past
Which you recall, my present state uncouth
And like the cancer of my former self;
You show me my disease, I stand aghast:
Love, which should be my joy, reflects harsh truth.

xxii. To you there is a multitude of parts
And to each part variety of acts;
The pupil shines and largens or contracts;
The voice it speaks or sings and love imparts.
Each line and curve moved by your slightest arts
Has worth exceeding all my earthly tracts
(As each from your perfection but detracts)
And worth exceeding mine and many hearts.
And thus I fear a harsh comparison,
In trepidation I aspire to you
And offer sacrifice, my heart and verse,
And beg you take the whole, or some portion,
And hold me in your heart, a lovelorn shrew:
Though (in their worth) your heart and mine obverse.

xxiii. And when I say that I aspire to you
I do not deem to dream equality
Nor think you anything but royalty
And me a nuisance of a fly to shoo.
As awe filled scholars from the greats imbue
The echoes of extant vivacity
Though quite aware that in reality
They'll never reach despite attaining to.
You are to me a work of genius
Revered and loved, also adorned with praise,
Perfection for which I can only yearn;
My study, loved labour of Sisyphus:
I hang on every point, then with one gaze
Which warms my heart, I learn new love to learn.

xxiv. It's clear I'm not to you what you're to me:
No, I to all and all to me would show
The former nought, the latter nectar's flow,
In both equations there's asymmetry.
And what are you and what am I to be?
The seed and matted husk cannot both grow:
You earn your joy and I must know my woe,
In question there's no similarity.
And thus I can't connect what's yours and mine,
You rarefy my love which lacks purchase,
If but as then, we knew a shared desire;
We both have hearts (although your heart's divine),
I ask, could they be joined in lasting bliss?
Perhaps not. Odds ignored, I'll yet aspire.

xxv. You are the hearth that gives the gift of heat
I, firewood that desires to be consumed,
I wait beside the fire in warmth illumed
Obedient at my mistress's feet;
And added to the fire - my life complete;
But is the night too warm? Has spring time bloomed?
A log too many? Have expenses loomed?
Perhaps this fire is used to burning peat?
And through my love of you I know my aim
But this purpose must be reciprocal
Or else I'm left a key without a lock,
Discarded wood beside my fiery dame;
That said, the choice is yours to burn what fuel
You see as fit for your discerning stock.

xxvi. I count on fingers all your positives
As they exceed the ten I move to toes
And when beyond the twenty number grows
I see that all become affirmatives,
Countless testaments to superlatives
And attestations beaming like rainbows
And glist'ning forth as dew on fresh blown rose;
This sum of some, the complemented gives.
And were my digits worth the worth they count
And seeped that worth from limb to trunk to heart
I might presume to show the love I know;
But as it stands I treasure drops from fount
Ignoring source and what your rills impart:
I'm caught upon the stasis of the flow.

xxvii. Although in other times (they're fond recalled)
Your heart and mine knew an equality
There's now a marked superiority
Which always was: my heart belied, was walled.
If I remember mine was closed, yours called,
Then time unravelled asynchronously,
And mine was open like an injury
Its seeping exudate your heart appalled.
Now mine is healed and dry: reverential,
And recognises yours the better heart,
And mine not worthy to receive its balms;
In all of this the flow's not sequential;
I've given you a piece of verse: a start
In saying that you floored me with your charms.

xxviii. There is your beauty, but also talent,
To find not each but both displayed in one,
It were as if the grace of God you'd won;
This pair they form a perfect complement.
You capture hearts without the will (unmeant),
And then you capture minds (as if for fun)
With demonstrations as to how it's done,
Exemplifying reach of mind's trained bent.
My love leaves me not knowing left from right;
I love you for your femininity:
I love you for your mastery of skill;
You're like the grove that shows both shade and light,
A work of art of mixed equality,
A choice to choose each side of which will fill.

xxix. And there are things your beauty shows to me
A love of life and evenness of mien
And though your attitude's one of disdain
It grants to me required humility;
Your heart instructs, mine is the devotee,
To condescend to mine it does not deign
But sets the example from which I gain,
One demonstrating rich simplicity.
And thus I owe a debt for what you show
One that I wish I could repay in kind
And as I cannot I resort to verse;
That you might read and reading learn to know
My heart and knowing it perhaps could find
Some worth in sow's ear claimed as silken purse.

xxx. I stand amazed by beauty in your face,
A noble countenance which does not mock
And shows the inward charm of which you've stock
The rest have linen, you present fine lace.
I stand and look upon perfected grace,
The way your delectations interlock
And make a fusion to which people flock,
Yours tell me I was born of different race.
And all attraction's seeds are sown by hearts,
And this of yours swells, magnifies the rest,
This which of yours God granted from above;
An aeon each to each the other parts
Devoting you all time, approaching best,
The age that's last should show your heart and love.

xxxi. And I was captured by your beck'ning smile
And looks suggesting depths of playful joy
And your demeanour neither lax nor coy:
Pictured maturity, it did beguile;
Did I detect a woman's love of wile?
A still existent longing to enjoy?
A pleasure permanent that would not cloy?
I looked in hope and saw these three a while.
You thus with intimation won my heart,
Inviting promises did captivate,
Enticed with irresistible allure;
And in all this I still can't see my part
My role was passive - someone else's bait -
Laid on purpose - to burden - not to cure.

xxxii. I wandered unaware of love for you
Until both years and more divided us;
And if I knew a love I made no fuss,
I sucked on country pleasures as swains do,
In me platonic innocences grew
And only now my thoughts form exodus
Towards your realms which turn me Tantalus
But teased with what I never knew I knew.
And were we once again the two I miss
I would declare what feelings moved my heart
And run the risk that I would isolate
But gain the chance to realise a bliss;
Recalling then, I never played the part,
And now I think on it it is too late.

xxxiii. You were the cynosure for your beauty,
But there was something else which some despise:
It was as if rocket fuel fired your eyes
Propelling shafts of light from you to me
And you aware of this with certainty,
And with this gift of glance you'd hypnotise;
And what the hand dare seize this fiery prize?
Who could aspire to its sublimity?
I fell in love with your optics and you,
We said we'd wed - I already promised,
And rationale chose the former vow,
I hadn't learnt yet 'Better none than two',
With lack of candour, jealousies surfaced,
And might again, had you the same eyes now.

xxxiv. Before all else, my love for you was pure,
And showed simplicity of soul and mind,
But absolute in that it was refined,
A proof requiring flame from you for sure;
It's true you caught me with a well known lure
Although you didn't think I was a find:
Regardless of the flotsam's play, you shined,
For Cupid's dart, you offered me a cure.
The love of you was that which armed the dart:
A womanhood with rightful certainty,
A woman knowing little want or need;
The lust was what propelled it to my heart:
A womanhood with liberality,
A woman reigning over act and deed.

xxxv. I knew you in the besséd bliss of youth
And would have read you Donne's love poetry
Had I not known (or felt) with certainty
Your heart was not accustomed to such truth;
I read alone (for self invoking ruth)
And thought of you as you would never be,
Saw us depicted in the Extasie,
The break of day was real in verse, forsooth!
It is surprising with my odd ideas
That our affairs persisted past a fling
Or that indeed they started up at all;
Most strangely afterwards, and through the years,
There were echoes, which, pregnant of nothing,
Suggested rolling all into one ball.

xxxvi. Your shock of hair and eyes were red and green;
Your manners' meaning: provincial not prim;
And when we met I noticed you were trim,
The finest of your race I'd ever seen.
I was idiotic and drunk and keen
You drank but not enough to grant my whim
My quite unconscious love was full to brim
And friendship over years was my love's screen.
And in my heart I knew I was outclassed
By beauty, youth and your intelligence,
On catching sight of you, sure, I desired
Naivety of aspiration passed;
With growing knowledge of my ignorance
I wouldn't try to seize though I aspired.

xxxvii. I think I could have meant something to you
If not for drink and immaturity,
Which went together surreptitiously
And with this pair of ills my chances flew.
We kind of fell together, didn't woo,
Then for a time (mine passed idyllically)
We stayed a couple, but untypically;
And then we fell apart (we lacked a glue).
With you ahead of my experience
We smoked for England - joined in more than tar,
I came to know your close embrace and kiss.
Though now to recollect might cause offence
(For only Eliot may go this far)
Your bust filled promise of pneumatic bliss.

xxxviii. You effervesced, sublimed, did not recede,
You squeezed a glint of joy from everything,
Your smile, your turn of phrase, the slightest thing,
You showed a font of pleasures, yours the lead;
You knew your voice and mind and choice and deed,
Most liberated young woman living:
I would have sacrificed to anything
To join (though manacle) that which was freed.
Although our lips approached and touched to kiss
And though we both were equal in our youth
Dividing us somehow I felt an age:
You leaving as I entered where I'd miss
The glimpse of you that love had seen as truth:
A view of some fine player on fine stage.

xxxix. The French have given names to lots of things,
As names suggest, their kissing is an art
With which they point and sharpen Cupid's dart
And leave the stung to hunger for what stings;
For them, what great advantages it brings:
The most unguarded access to the heart
Is quickly opened up in whole or part
To raise or dash a tinsel hope on wings.
I think you were not representative
(Although perhaps you were ... they only say ...)
Though France was home (of kissing you'd a grip);
Initial steps in love were tentative,
You kissed me once, then almost straight away,
Ideas contracted to 'relationship'.

xl. I'd strongly doubt if you or I recall,
And though we met, the most of yours and mine
Was correspondence course with line on line
Of trivialities sent each to all.
The little jump of heart when post would call
Perhaps an invitation (not to dine)
And when together we would drink (not wine)
A *faux pas* then the drink might make me fall ...
And after our innocent letters ceased
The strangest situations through the years
Would bring your name to mind with little ground;
Maybe my stock of love for you increased
(Although I don't remember any tears)
And waxed because (quite simply) you were sound.

xli. So it was: you were young and you were fit
(I'd go so far to say without a flaw)
You knew fine well that I was spoken for
Which just enhanced the pleasure gained from it.
I didn't win your grace with charm or wit
Your choice took charge and though we'd met before
(Though not like this) recalling I implore
Will any leave the final female hit?
And was I able to evade the blame?
It really matters not - the true is sage
A flitting love, and joy, fit hand in glove.
If I was young again I'd do the same
But I am old and wary of my age
And less distracted by the calls of love.

xlii. So my problem with love, as you can see,
Is not about her, but revolves round me.

BOOK XI – COMPLEXITIES OF FAMILY

i. These are difficulties with family,
I criticise in way that I see fair,
I wish to know through this just what went wrong
And then to compensate the best I can.

ii. In most my family (and most is good)
I would not see real failings (falls from grace)
And these have been, not always, but at times,
A beneficial influence on me.

iii. My mother saw to bring me to this world
What greater gift is granted anyone;
These people served to form me in my youth
To most of them I owe a gratitude.

iv. As I grow older now their mould recedes
But still I see the parts of them in me;
I love my family (excepting one)
This love should add some weight to my critique.

v. Throughout my years there's been a stratagem
By which the members of my family
Apportion blame, exonerate themselves,
And demonstrate to minors wrong is right.

vi. They first divide the group to strands of one
With blame located in another strand,
And one explaining says we must sustain
Injustice of the other, though unfair.

vii. This ploy remains divisive to extremes
And makes for far more stress than it would solve:
"It's him who says you can't, as you can see ...
If it were up to me, I'd take your side"

viii. And in this way the one would disagree
But would not raise themselves to then object
To other one that is the cause of it
To one that they continue then to blame.

ix. And thus because (and only when it suits)
My family refuse to treat themselves
Collectively, just this is how I will
Refer to them, portraying as a group.

x. I speak of bonds of blood and bonds of vow
Limits of but one generation up,
Ignoring siblings as united strong
We struggled in our turns in swaddling-bands.

xi. In truth in part, the reason I have grouped
Is in attempt to lessen caused offence,
Portrait is read by relatives of mine
I trust they find the reason in its rhyme.

xii. In what I'll say of this I'll speak of woes
Although let me pre-empt what some might say
And state my woes as insignificant
Which were a calm to others' fired ferment.

xiii. The word that's love was never mentioned once
Almost as if it were prohibited
Or otherwise omission like a ban
Which left the word unused in family.

xiv. And since in adult life I noticed this
And made reference to that which strikes so strange
Another said to me he knew the same
Whose age and parents' class were similar.

xv. This makes me think that this experiment
Was general thought of some 'progressive' caste
Who blurred the lines between one's kith and kin
And not specific to my family.

xvi. It's strange, I've never asked the reasons why
But viewing opposites perhaps less strange,
What child reared differently would think to ask:
"Oh mother dear, why did you tell your love?"

xvii. On thinking this I phoned one half and asked
And I was told it wasn't conscious choice
And further was proposed retrospective
Falsification as the reason for.

xviii. My memories against another one's
With thirty years of time elapsed since then,
Concordance won't be known from two extremes
Thus I rely on what I can recall.

xix. Perhaps my parents knew a reticence
And they observed a taciturnity;
My brother first then, soon in sequence, me:
This parenthood was new to both of them.

xx. Associated (which they won't deny)
Was stern dictate that stated not to use
Words "mother" also "father" (kith not kin)
Replacing them with normal Christian names.

xxi. No 'mother' and no 'father' and no 'love'
A true constraint in vocabulary
With which to venture forth into the world
And try to empathise with others' mode.

xxii. I never understood the family
I didn't see the close relationships
(Of note maternal and paternal bonds)
And thought my peers found independent state.

xxiii. This, but expression of my social norm:
I fell below the nuclear standard
The facts of which I did not understand,
And there stagnated in my separate pool.

xxiv. Deprive a child of normal family
(That happens all too often in this day)
But then deprive that child of words to know
And then in many spheres he cannot grow.

xxv. I had scarce grown but saw an attitude
Towards pretence of an equality
Between the parents' and the children's state:
The same? How can it be? The stance is wild.
xxvi. Encouraged to compete on adult terms
With adult members of my family
I would but fail the test as I was young
And sit and wonder what my difference was.
xxvii. It was a race between a horse and foal,
A bird persuading fledglings they could fly
When truth be told they'd plummet to the ground,
An ugly duckling never changed to swan.
xxviii. The way it functioned was competitive,
An adult would congratulate themselves
If they succeeded to outsmart a child
And show a better formed intelligence.
xxix. This taught a love of what is scholarly,
For being right is what both are at heart;
But saying that, in greater scheme of things,
Put plain, such skills remain academic.
xxx. But some competing were without a fault:
And they would rage at any failings found
And if (as sometimes might) things proved them wrong
They would refuse to give apology.
xxxi. These theories were accomplished sophistries
And introduced false logic to the child:
If you maintain what's incorrect as right,
Ignore the morals, it becomes correct.
xxxii. And thus the child was never really taught
A moral framework (such as most will know)
But given independent building blocks
Constructing out of these, from which to learn.
xxxiii. These sophistries appeared to me as strange
As other children's parents (so I guessed)
Adopted different means to discipline,
Dealt more with what's in hand, more to the point.
xxxiv. The crux would seem as best expressed like this:
There is an overlap between the start
And end - dependence and independence -
With every parents' aim to smooth the change.
xxxv. What here I bring in doubt, might be applied
Towards the end (and then and only if
Hypocrisy can be removed from it)
But it's not suited to the start of things.
xxxvi. Regardless, as I said is how it was:
The one remaining thing to touch upon:
I'd alter this completely if I could,
My hindsight changing things to be as should.

xxxvii. Adults in life were manipulative:
Responding they might say, the children too
But you would wonder where they got it from
If not passed down a generation's span.
xxxviii. One thing above the others sticks in mind
Is mother and my father didn't speak
(When they were separated and divorced)
And found a novel means to have their say:
xxxix. Whereby the adults spoke through their children,
Or rather child would act as messenger
And then on leaving either's company
Would be entrusted with some words to learn.
xl. And never did I feel the messenger,
I ever took a part in what was said
And took a side, I was in every way
Included in parental argument.
xli. And looking back it wasn't such a weight
But who knows how its influenced me since
Transmitting light of vehement exchange:
Thus words of hate were spoken through my mouth.
xlii. And there were other stratagems they used
(In what at length became internalised)
What seemed to be the war to put me down
And sap the natural growth of self respect.
xliii. By one repeatedly (and not the rest)
An attitude problem was diagnosed:
Now I would ask if it was his or mine,
But then I felt the crack of one more lash.
xliv. And then if some did say I was no good
Their bland critique did nought to heal the fact,
Indeed their condescending platitudes
Might make the very harm they warned against.
xlv. And then the adults would manipulate
Not only us, but other adults too
And normal everyday activities
Became a battleground to win or lose.
xlvi. The planning for a summer holiday
Might have attached a hidden attitude,
Depend upon a calculated spleen,
As far from fun as anyone could think.
xlvii. One manipulated another one
To break a vow concerning children's keep
And its financial cost remained far less
Than its profound effect on harmony.
xlviii. Some furniture was ordered for my home
And even this became a focal point;
Intransigence matched with intransigence,
Manipulation taking place of sense.

xlix. And there existed tried and tested ways
Whereby a promise was extracted from
Unwilling minors: take place centre stage
The adult realm of family meetings.

l. Most don't know this feckless institution:
For those of you who never knew or cared
It rears its ugly head around those times
Parent's authority evaporates.

li. This institution is a pillar built
To prop a rotting edifice that sags,
The most do not rely upon support:
In this adults adulterate themselves.

lii. With near and dear the drive to justify
Authority of those least justified
Distilled itself to pained obfuscations
And machinations labelled as "meetings".

liii. The adult's feelings and their attitudes
Were aired in form of actualities,
The minor's left unsaid through minor's lack
Of will or talent to manipulate.

liv. Things were discussed, and those in adult terms,
And feelings analysed by those who could,
Projected on those claiming innocence:
If told you felt some way there was no 'no'.

lv. Resulting in extracted promises
The meat of which when frills had been removed:
"I'll do something I don't want to", that or
"I will pretend to like someone I don't".

lvi. And as the chance of even mild dislike
Was one ignored, as seen beyond the pale,
As minors grew to independence, then,
The lost control meant incomprehension.

lvii. I guess there was some sense in it for them:
At heart they know that I dislike someone,
Through these they force me to say otherwise,
And thus they win my tongue towards my mind.

lviii. And if at stages 'kids' were off the rails
(This held as fixed idea by one adult)
Then wild through lack of some encouragement
Not lack of meeting's social discipline.

lix. The "meetings" simply served to lend support
To failing parts of family affairs
And those who lacked in their authority
Would use them most, debasing means and ends.

lx. With same logic that suggests it's not wise
To have a child attend psychiatrist
I would not urge such an analysis
Of children's place in social synthesis.

lxi. The fact that there were "meetings" does suggest
That there were frictions of whatever kind:
Certain there were, and it remained the case
That minors weren't the first ones to obey.

lxii. That or perhaps the regimental ways
Were such that any taken path of youth
Would draw opposing sides towards conflict
Through disagreements, be they large or small.

lxiii. Regardless, frictions led to reprimands:
From one, a portion of these reprimands
Were coloured with an anger (and intense):
Verbal aggression, fulminating rage.

lxiv. Perhaps correct if sovereign rule was broke,
Or there was danger of a loss of life,
Or violation of that held most dear,
Or threat to mainstay of the family.

lxv. But then to demonstrate a rage and ire
When hair is found in plughole of the bath
Or simply when authority is crossed
Or an inflated ego is opposed.

lxvi. Perhaps it was a way to introduce
A certain attitude that some may have:
A free expression of the thought and mind
(And this is how emotions run on screen).

lxvii. Extrapolating such an argument
(And making but a trite analogy)
It might seem sound and good and wise to teach
A child to swear because some adults swear.

lxviii. My introduction to this spoken rage
Arrived and at a time inopportune;
Earlier, I would have grown used to it:
An infancy would make accustomed child;

lxix. If later, same I would have met elsewhere,
Through others, and developed strategies
And gained an understanding of the ways
And ambiguities of anger's modes.

lxx. It's just the time it came was such a time
That left a youthful me without resource
To deal on terms I could with spoken rage,
To feel unequal force of impotence.

lxxi. And that is how, then, I was spoken to,
And still I think the mode and means unfair,
Again one grown was speaking to a child,
If an exchange, clear not an even one.

lxxii. Perhaps this was their way to raise a child:
To try to scare to form behaviour's mould;
They made attempt and left a bitter taste
And one which has not been erased with haste.

lxxiii. And then, the arguments which went towards
An atmosphere of terror in my youth:
With these were times devoid of normal sense:
A purity of animosity.

lxxiv. And these two adults just took turns to shout,
Sometimes exchange would last for hour on hour
With smaller sibling screaming all the while,
Ignored, of course, as all else was ignored.

lxxv. Antagonisms did affect my youth,
Infused a sense of ire and impotence;
You were incensed by word's intensity
Yet powerless to stop or stem their flow.

lxxvi. Trapped in a rut they would but rant and scream
And take no notice of the clear effect:
Producing stress within the family
When their clear roll should be to lessen it.

lxxvii. And they would argue over anything:
At times whose turn it was to drive the car,
At other times the weight of what was said
(Or what was said in times past memory).

lxxviii. And they argued with exclusivity,
One absolutely wrong, the other right,
A single word would prove the case as true,
Or single word would represent a hate.

lxxix. And they would argue with an importance
That swept considerations to one side;
An infant left to scream in its distress,
Utmost in mind was who could score a point.

lxxx. And they would argue with a vehemence
That made some other's anger show as calm,
And it would seem that others merely played
And you could see the love beneath their ire.

lxxxi. At times like this a kind observer's eye
Still would be pressed to find a reason for
Continuance of this relationship
As it was ruled by strife and argument.

lxxxii. This couple found a means to coexist
And live in coming years, but at what cost!
Recalling flaw supporting other flaw
And with the weight born by the vulnerable.

lxxxiii. And so I think you get the basic point:
Within my home, adults argued with rage,
And I would think that they were worse than most,
Although to some as roses blown in dew.

lxxxiv. Ignoring relative severity
I found the animosity which was
Between the couple (and the overflow)
A sharp and sided, keen felt source of woe.

lxxxv. And they would view emotional blackmail
As fair and reasoned means to turn a child:
To tell the tale the way it happened then,
Opposing youth they hit below the belt.

lxxxvi. I wished to do a geographical
When I was only aged about sixteen:
I told the parent that I lived with then
Desire to move to other parent's home.

lxxxvii. In order to prevent this happening
The parent that I lived with then disgorged
The "facts" about the other parent's life,
Of time together in antipathy.

lxxxviii. And these barbed "facts" dissuaded me from move
And not because the other seemed unkind,
But as the one who told the "facts" displayed
How much offence the move as planned would cause.

lxxxix. And there were other instances whereby
My arm was twisted and I chose a choice
That was not on the list of things in mind
When I set out with plans of what to do.

xc. The ploy that I described at Book's outset
In which an adult blames another one
And through this step aside is not accused
In essence is, emotional blackmail.

xci. In this emotions that attach to one
Are drawn upon forgiving other one:
The gambit runs: trust me, I'm on your side
Forgive the other one's few minor faults.

xcii. And not as much emotional blackmail
(Although emotional frontal assault)
Were ways and means some used to put me down
Which polarised my way of thought and mind.

xciii. I polarised: divided life to strands;
I did the two things which I know cause harm,
Exacerbate those weaknesses I have
And generate illness where once was none.

xciv. Much later on (stretched over ten years) stood
My diagnosis of disordered moods:
Emotions' stress and moods - the two are linked -
I see in this a kind of genesis.

xcv. Not quite creation (standing on its own)
But certainly a setting of the scene,
A preparation for a later fall,
My ills were not conceived in adulthood.

xcvi. Not just the blackmail, but emotions too
Were overwhelming for one ill equipped:
At heart dysfunctional the family,
Square pegs, round holes, there was anomaly.

xcvii. And there are institutions which are free
And these my parents chose at every turn
In order to offset the child's expense
That might be met and claim it from the state.
xcviii. It was the tightest of economies
Insisting first that nothing would be spent:
A sure fire way of moderating costs
Whereby expenditure was kept to nil.
xcix. Perhaps to lean towards these sparing ways
Would make the most of then limited means,
But to adopt them in the absolute
Has disadvantages for those concerned.
c. If all is seen as free, is seen a right,
The motivation for the taking part
(Appreciation) may evaporate
And might just leave he who partakes unmoved.
ci. It's not to say that if it's free it's poor,
But it is difficult to sense the worth
In what is gifted when there is no scale,
No measurement of what is good and great.
cii. That was a minor hiccup of my youth
But now this love of free institutions
Takes on a novel form in adulthood,
The sort of game I'd rather wasn't played.
ciii. Those close consider it to be the case
That social services meet all my needs,
A call to them (or psychiatric team)
Would solve then any, every woe of mine.
civ. They do not see that call to services
Is not a passive chat with helping hand
But indication of emergency,
Is an alarm to those with power to spare.
cv. My family, they think to help my cause:
In actual fact they harm or threaten to;
And though they make a claim to offer aid
There help is but alert to services.
cvi. It is one thing to take what's offered free,
A total different thing then to assume
That all and everything that's given free
Must be because of this beyond critique.
cvii. And that is how some relatives see it:
They think psychiatrists cannot be wrong
Despite that one of mine was held to rule:
Their utter faith in this tendentious field.
cviii. My family will state it's for the best:
For good or bad healthcare is free to me -
But state beds in London's psychiatry
Are far from what asylum's meant to be.

cix. To old and young throughout my family
Emotions seem a source of ridicule,
A dirty word whose mention just provokes
A snigger or a condescending look.

cx. And were a son or daughter (I was son)
To find themselves in homelessness (I did)
There'd be a need for well thought out support
And in its place arose what seemed a jest.

cxi. Not only my hysteria, but cause
Was plain ignored and I was patronised
(Such as you'd chide or treat bad tempered child)
And that at times as harsh as harsh can be.

cxii. What they'd suggest: "Turn up to A&E" -
I did this more than once - and told to "Go!" -
And when my relatives were forced to care
They rather chose to get the police involved.

cxiii. And such a parent touched by honesty
(With probity and not an agenda)
They could have said: "Begone and leave this place!"
Instead: "The Mental Health Act's on our side!"

cxiv. Perhaps they had the right committing me -
If so, in this they'd be Draconian,
Supporting laws infringing human rights
They'd never wish including them, the sane.

cxv. Of course this legislation's just the type
Enacted on the weak who threaten strong
(Perhaps the more in thought than deed) the thrust
To outlaw threats, intentions, even thoughts.

cxvi. Let us ignore this transient aside
That criticises our Mental Health Act,
My topic was my closer relatives
And how they interact (as they see fit).

cxvii. They show no tendency to share my state
(Although my state has been at times removed
From normalcy) they fail to understand
Objective facts, realities in it.

cxviii. A step too far (I claim satire though true)
I ask of them some water for my thirst
And they refuse and recommend to me
A mental institution for my need!

cxix. This ethos I described of what's for free
Pervades my family's comprehension
Of what entails a need - how *can* one want
When government supports the welfare state?

cxx. And theirs and my reality depart
(And more of that before we end this Book),
My relatives don't feel the same as me,
In other words they lack some sympathy.

cxxi. As well as sympathy there's empathy
And someone showing one may also show
The other, just the same as lack of one
Portends, as likely then, the lack of both.
cxxii. The art of fully comprehending and
Projecting personality into
The object which is contemplated - thus
The dictionary defines its empathy.
cxxiii. And working with this definition's words:
Can family profess, if they request
Good health (nought less) before the helping hand
Of empathy extends to soothe a smart?
cxxiv. Must diabetic leave the family
Simply because blood glucose levels fall?
And just because there is a history
Will this disease replace the relative?
cxxv. In some respects I'm handled in this way:
As close to empathy as I will get -
I'm seen as polarised, as good or bad,
And patronised as either flawed or sound.
cxxvi. And thus I'm never seen in sinusoid
But in an analogue as on or off:
I'm either fit for institution's care
Or capable of taking on the world.
cxxvii. So relatives attempt to empathise
But cannot see the mix that is my life,
I am composed of parts of health and pain
And they can only see the wholes of parts.
cxxviii. The challenge is as great when I'm perceived
As healthy - obstacle on obstacle
Is littered in my path, and I must deal,
As if there's nothing wrong with me at all.
cxxix. And so with drinking - topic of Book VI -
I mustn't drink and yet my relatives
Assume that my resolve is strong enough
That some will drink like lords in front of me.
cxxx. And it's thought fit for me to live alone
With some support which is conditional
Upon the fact that I am not to chose
To live nearby to either parents home.
cxxxi. And it's thought fit for me to face the world
As if I were as able as next man
And God! I'd need to be to face the woes
Which mostly I have heaped upon myself.
cxxxii. However family may try, and think
That they succeed, they fail at each attempt
To put themselves in someone else's shoes:
They fail to empathise - and all will lose.

cxxxiii. If lacking sympathy and empathy
Then quite as sure as one and one makes two
We lack a common frame of reference:
Put plain, we do not even understand.
cxxxiv. My experience is so far removed
From that described to be normality;
Thus lacking common frame of reference
Perhaps would come as no surprise to some.
cxxxv. But then my father and my mother were
(Before retiring) one psychologist
And academic specialising in
Broad social policy - they'd understand?
cxxxvi. Perhaps they do and I am in the wrong;
Perhaps I lack the strength of mind to see
And grasp reality the way they do;
Perhaps the lack of resonance is mine.
cxxxvii. It just might be my disability
Reduces me and most to different stock
And even when I'm relatively well
There are byways of health I just can't walk.
cxxxviii. No sympathy? No empathy? As said
Of course results in linked deficiency
Of common frame of reference, the bond
That's needed lacking those adhesive ties.
cxxxix. And if the fault is mine I cannot tell,
I can't, and yet I know mismatch is there,
Me and my relatives don't seem to view
Each other eye to eye in honesty.
cxl. Perhaps the gap of years is amplified
By passing time (as things solidify)
And thus divisions can't be harmonised
Through multitude of cultural differences.
cxli. I start to feel I've some impairments too
Beyond my given harsh diagnosis,
And these may play a role in my affairs
And could distance myself from relatives.
cxlii. What stands above is how I have disclaimed,
And now some lines rewritten from my verse
Some which I penned thirteen long months ago
(When I was angry with my family):
cxliii. "I suffer from a disability:
You've claimed humanity your whole life long
But simply lack some, all capacity
Of sympathy for any but the strong.
cxliv. Death threats at hostel: 'Your door has a lock'
In desolation's jaws: 'Just get a job'
With nothing: 'We won't boost your wallet's stock';
Such travesty our bonds of blood will rob."

BOOK XII – PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSIS

i. Although the label's changed with changing years
It's now *schizoaffective disorder* :
This half new term should mean something to shrinks,
By God, it does to most the rest of you!

ii. This diagnosis is debatable:
It represents a mixture of disease
From different camps - and that which doesn't fit
Is reassessed and joined by but a name.

iii. To classify as either 'thought' or 'mood'
Is superseded using this new term,
Before the cause was one or other (choice),
Now nothing's said by simply choosing both.

iv. And too, I may not meet conditions set
By diagnosis that's debatable -
I question twice - and though not claiming health,
I'd guess a calmer diagnosis fits.

v. So you can tell I've been in hospital,
And thus you know for sure that I've been ill,
Which means that I possess experience
That you will never have (you thank your Lord).

vi. Subjectively I've passed the bounds of sense
And thought outside the box - said otherwise,
At times like these I've known insanity,
And mark the thing as feared known quantity.

vii. And should I try to share subjective thoughts
Associated with insanity?
Not only do I want to speak of health
But view the thoughts beyond my power to share.

viii. My current state could be my best attempt
At even maintenance of mental health,
God praised, for once it may be true to say,
I do not drink and know sobriety.

ix. And in this state it seems wise to describe
My mental map of what it means to live
A person tainted by psychiatry:
Rough guide to diagnosis (ups and downs).

x. My fundamentals for smooth mental health
Are facts, hard come by facts which bolster self,
Which can maintain my sense of buoyancy,
And court and call remission's sober train.

xi. These are the type of thinking thoughts which help,
Not those fast rules, the likes of "Do not drink",
But those which go towards an overview,
Which makes the whole as comprehensible.

xii. A stricken mind needs facts to tie it down,
This, how I've lived now year on year, it's clear
Madness remains sterile: my verse, my wealth,
I'll tell ten facts which prop my mental health.

xiii. Fact one - ill health will lead to happiness:
Of all the bastard traps of fate and truth
(And having known a few in weal and strife)
This is the one that tricks me every time.
xiv. The problem is that much is chemical
Whoever knows an elevated mood
(Not least if it's produced by some disease)
Will know well-being, and a happiness.
xv. And those who've known the highs and lows of love
Can tell you best how happiness deceives
And such would understand me when I speak
Of how a joy can be chimerical.
xvi. Ignoring this detached philosophy
When ill, I am content to be content,
And think that life has finally born fruit
In that I seem to know my share of joy.
xvii. The happiness that's ignorant with bliss
I treasure, feel and know; not shared by those
Who have to deal with me and new found 'joy'
(Such as the bar staff, family and friends).
xviii. Although I'm happy, it is true I show
The pent belligerence of teenage child,
And with the passion for opposing all
A brusque simplicity will correspond.
xix. I blindly cause offence and think I'm smart
(Let's say, more often than I tend to do)
And also think myself superior
(And not to most, to almost, if not all).
xx. To top these attitudes I think I'm right
(And dealing with subjects unknown to me)
My arguments are pitched against the wind
And claim such things as of I'm ignorant.
xxi. It's with this petulance I choose to drink
And snatch disaster from fair ruin's jaws:
Belligerence and drink will form a pair
Which each half aggravating other one.
xxii. My feelings (from disease) of 'happiness'
Are better termed an elevated mood,
And this is what I'm known to suffer from,
Known otherwise as mania, a high.
xxiii. However named, the thoughts as these undo
And turn me to abysmal company:
And certainly, I will commit offence
The scale of which sometimes defies excuse.
xxiv. When manic I ignore important facts,
I'll not consider whereabouts to sleep:
Like this I'll oversimplify my needs,
And tangle up myself in reeds nay weeds.

xxv. Fact two - is when I'm ill, I think I'm not:
Is this a myth that's simply shown a lie?
Perhaps for those observing from the line
But not for those caught in the heat of things.

xxvi. When I've opposed the world with lack of sense
(Insisting all was wrong and I was right)
It would seem obvious that fervour was
The throes of lunatic and self-forged bands?

xxvii. The painful truth is not to be ignored,
Though mad will claim its false repeatedly:
It's seen a sign towards recovery
When lunatics admit they have been mad.

xxviii. The term for this ability: *insight* ;
Though I've not sought this balm in manic times
It's almost needed more than lacking sense,
This aptitude, a missing source of light.

xxix. It tends to be as I become unwell
That I'm convinced that all is sound and good,
So much the case that I've been known to stop
The medication that I am prescribed.

xxx. I feel so fine that some may think me sane
(And that includes some psychiatric staff)
The rot is hidden by the surface layers
And hidden such that some won't think me mad.

xxxi. But circumstance may cause the rot to show
(Particularly when alcohol's concerned):
I hope that people mark (I know some don't)
The differences between madness and me.

xxxii. Confused and overlapping with insight
(Or, what I mean, the frequent lack of it)
Is wish to stay away (at every cost)
From psychiatric hospitals and wards.

xxxiii. And this desire dovetails with thoughts of health
(The thoughts of health of those who lack insight)
Although revulsion for the dreaded wards
A reasoned 'nay' in any circumstance.

xxxiv. This strong desire to spurn the hospitals
Is justified by knowing what they mean,
More will be said about these places soon,
And why they're not all that they're meant to be.

xxxv. At times not only do I lack insight,
But every fibre of my being stands
Against the hospital: together these
Bode ill for voluntary, good treatment plans.

xxxvi. When ill, if I but knew that I was ill,
Perhaps this asks for more than God would grant,
Not only would my past be free of much
But future would not threaten so and such.

xxxvii. I've cursed a thousand oaths against fact three
(And wasted breath on what is set in stone):
Despite experience some still won't see
That I'm a mix of illness and of health.

xxxviii. You'd think most realise the gulf between
One diagnosed who's in remission now
And state of illness, say, or (long gone) health?
You'd think but be surprised by each extreme.

xxxix. The first ones seem as though they won't forgive
What has been caused when ravaged by disease
And also seem to see the suffering mind
A threat (and see attack the best defence).

xl. This attitude would seem a moral stance
Belonging to an individualist
I'd guess that such a view goes hand in hand
With opposition to the welfare state.

xli. With each example one who's needing help
Would be considered author of their ills:
The unemployed should work or else they'll starve
The mentally ill can just retire and die.

xlii. And everyone's entitled to their views
Which state: if God disfavoured my disease
I might discover my morality
Should be aligned with individualists.

xliii. And I am still entitled to my views
Which state: if God had felt for my disease
Some might discover their morality
No longer was aligned with seraphim.

xliv. And then there's those that think me right as rain
Regard remission as a state of health
Equated to that shown by everyone
Who is and never was one touched by this.

xlv. In truth I'm in between - the half see ill -
The other half see health - and neither's right:
Perhaps the blame is undeserved by me,
And some cause stress as they expect the moon.

xlvi. And each extreme remains a stress and strain
So half the time insults will patronise
The other half with standards reaching stars:
One shoe too big, the other one too small.

xlvii. So some remain just cautious of offence
And other ones pretend that nothing's wrong,
Where does a person who's impaired in thought
Begin to put themselves to navigate.

xlviii. And to one side - an enemy of sorts:
And to the other - expectation claws:
To ostracise and thus avoid the stress?
There's those so close, I have to second guess.

xlix. Fact four - disease is harsh and yet remits:
Though there are those who having seen ill health
Believe that only this repeats itself:
Perhaps disease remits, but not for them.

l. My metaphor - not fixed firm I can change
I'm not a million different people, no,
But in my mode I'm good as I can be:
Remission asks, almost earns, forgiveness.

li. So after being ill I have been known
To gain full-time employment, earn a wage,
To go to work and toil each working day,
And live and pay my rent and bills and tax.

lii. Thus could remission show more willingness,
Or more desire to mix and take a part?
I've worked as software factory's employee,
Remunerated at the going rate.

liii. Although I've seized the chance (and after woe)
And studied at good universities,
Vocational, so academic course,
Although I've tried I've never qualified.

liv. Both post- and undergraduate degrees
(And one was taught in foreign language too);
Ambitious even with remission's grace:
I'd be surprised if current one bears fruit.

lv. To make attempt is good enough for me,
In fourth decade it's hard to socialise,
To learn with those a generation less:
And better to have tried to learn and failed ...

lvi. And after being ill I have been known
To live (in most ways) independently,
So now I've found a flat and clothe myself
And eat and drink (avoiding alcohol).

lvii. And independent living's novel still,
And I have learnt new skills and with the help
Of this remission, seeming to expand
More broadly than preceding illness plunged.

lviii. Remission is a joy and wonderful,
And it surprises that the human mind
Can mend at all when having known descent
Into the depths of chaos that's disease.

lix. Remission seems to be the gift of God;
At times it makes the one who knows it think
That pleasures (void of stimulants) exist
And life's been granted them in part for joy.

lx. So some refuse acknowledgement for this:
Let them concern themselves with what has passed,
But grant me sympathy, although little;
I may have shards, but still more than tittle.

lxi. Fact five - is seen a truth by everyone,
(And only slightly irks on stepping back):
This fact that those who lose their liberty,
When sectioned, are, because of way they think.

lxii. It can't be said that my psychiatrists
Have maintained privacy of views on this:
They have professed with utmost clarity
'Your mood is interfering with your thought'.

lxiii. Majority regard the fact as fine
That if you're thinking wrong, that you should be
Away from things a while, or put in prose,
Be locked in hospital awaiting health.

lxiv. And those who say this seem to be a type
Who think if everyone should think like them
The problems of the world would start to fade:
The prototype of social engineer.

lxv. And such as these (most) think it's fine to tell
Someone who's suicidal how to think,
And if they don't agree, to lock them up:
'For their own good' - of course that is the line.

lxvi. But what if these, the social engineers,
Themselves were told just what to think and do
There would be cries of foul from left and right
Talk of eroded civil liberties.

lxvii. We (those who lack a fully functioning mind)
Are not at liberty to think, not free,
This is fact five, which all would think as right,
But analysed should raise some questions, too.

lxviii. If what is said should mean locked ward for months
Who should decide that I'm not thinking right?
And damned by them am I entitled to
A second, free opinion, one which counts?

lxix. And should there be bureaucracy in place
With patients kept in hospital despite
The fact they've not been shown as thinking wrong?
And under lock and key why 'voluntary'?

lxx. Expecting seven years less life when ill
(With some disease), is not a part of this
The medication we are forced to take?
That, with some cognitive impairment, too?

lxxi. Fact five would state that if I'm thinking wrong
(Ignoring what I think to be the case)
A ward that's locked is where I will be sent:
That's nothing less than loss of liberty.

lxxii. For thinking wrong! what's meeted out seems harsh
But no one ever said the world was fair:
But were a London psychiatric ward
A nicer place, the narrow path were broad.

lxxiii. I spoke of few accepting me (fact three),
Although I would include the everyday
In things which should accept me more, and so,
Fact six - I struggle with what's thought mundane.
lxxiv. And by 'mundane' I mean the same as you,
Our definition's match for 'everyday':
So we agree on meanings for these words,
It's just for me these meanings mean distress.
lxxv. So these realities of everyday,
Those things that grate and grind at best of times,
The kind of things you don't accept with joy,
These things cause stress and angst, and challenge me.
lxxvi. I think my inability to deal
With normal quantities of stress and angst
Remains associated with the fact
I've been one diagnosed for fifteen years.
lxxvii. Although it's clearly not the label damns,
But underlying state of health which fails:
Attempting leaving pathos be, I say,
Compared to most there's something wrong with me.
lxxviii. I'd guess where I have written of myself
The reader might not think - 'Get over it!' -
But might be brought through verse to understand:
This, my portrait, attempts a truth to life.
lxxix. I emphasise my problem (as above)
And state the case as plain as plain can be -
A major psychiatric disorder,
Not an existential ennui, oh no!
lxxx. And so I claim the everyday (mundane)
Affects me in a way that's negative
A way to which the most are not exposed,
And that because the most are well, not ill.
lxxxi. For me this means a mild paranoia;
The passing thought that strangers know your face:
That private thoughts are public in domain:
Those reasons for peculiarities.
lxxxii. Each day in London paranoia wells:
The sane resist its swell as easily
As oil and water separate to layers:
The diagnosed react and take the bait.
lxxxiii. And so in smile or nod or look or glance
I see a meaning you will nip in bud,
A meaning given me by my disease,
A meaning making everyday to angst.
lxxxiv. And this you say remains figment of mind
(Those diagnosed well know the power this holds)
If this figment of mind is cause of stress,
I feel the strain of thought as real, no less.

lxxxv. Fact seven - sure the poison poisons me:
Much like my views on sectioning and thoughts
Although this might appear self evident
It's taken leaps and bounds to realise.

lxxxvi. With psychiatric ills, the starting point
Is to consider self immune from harm:
It's only with progression that you see
How much the whole disease is part of you.

lxxxvii. And when I say the poison poisons me
I mean I suffer, like (not with) the rest:
The rest are those, labelled with this label,
Who tend to isolate, and not commune.

lxxxviii. The pain I know is of and in the mind
And thus might not be thought as genuine,
I hear critique and claim reality
Because the actions realised are real.

lxxxix. If one in three have tried to end their life
And one in three of those have known success
Approximating, one in ten has died,
And what is worse, has died at their own hands.

xc. So tell me then just what is in the mind
When one in ten have found their life so bad
That ending it would seem the only choice
That's left in life, and they have chosen death.

xci. These sable facts to illustrate my point:
I strain and suffer under my disease,
My angst remains an actuality,
And this is shown in shapes and shades of death.

xcii. Repeating from elsewhere: with most and me
There is no common frame of reference:
I have the feeling that the stress I bear
Is only known to me and my disease.

xciii. But then I may be wrong to draw boundaries:
Perhaps the most will suffer, just like me,
But deal with it in ways which normalise -
The playing field is level - I might state.

xciv. The stuff of dreams is this equality:
Although I wish I could stand proud and claim
Subjective evenness for most and me
I know that diagnosis drives a wedge.

xcv. So using verse and what I know of most
I try to cultivate a common ground
(The one I found and chose to plough and sow
Is both a thorny and a stony one).

xcvi. I have my diagnosis and disease,
And though I shame admitting that it's true
I've suffered being one in three whose tried,
But writing this, not one of those who's died.

xcvii. Fact eight - there's little solace to be found
In London's state run psychiatric wards:
They serve a function, they contain an ill
And force not foster sought recovery.

xcviii. To take this fact and analyse a part;
Go ask one thousand folk what they would find
As fit to aid somebody convalesce:
What they'd suggest would not be found in there.

xcix. And who was it who said that madman should
Keep company with those deranged and mad:
For most mad company's a punishment
For us a feature of recovery.

c. Thus, lunacy will play a greater part
When health's rebuilt than when a person's ill,
When illness was diluted by the fact
That you're but one, and not surrounded by.

ci. I've heard of shrinks, who dealing with the mad,
Have had to go to shrinks themselves to cope;
And what of we when locked up night and day:
This aggravating factor is ignored.

cii. And so, the medication's there to take,
And ward is free (ha ha) of substances:
Where there's a will - and God there is a will
As strong as strong can be - there is a way.

ciii. There is a roof and walls and beds and food
And running water (hot and cold) and chairs
And then one door that locks and then the rest
The most of which don't lock and you are watched.

civ. It's not the kind of place you'd send your mum
Were it the case her nerves were playing up:
It is the kind of place you would think twice
Of paying call, your mum in there or not.

cv. And round about I'm trying to express
That London state run psychiatric wards
Are not ones suited to recovery
(Recovery in spite of, not because).

cvi. Last year a doctor examined the state
Of psychiatric wards: once seen he said
He would not let his relatives (if ill)
Use NHS's wards - he'd rather pay.

cvii. The place, not good enough for doctor's kin:
I'm not the only one to criticise,
And here I haven't even touched upon
'Practices' that have passed into practice.

cviii. No one in their right mind would choose this place
To convalesce, to rest, or wait awhile:
That any here regain their sanity
But shows the force that buoys recovery.

cix. Fact nine - the fact that thoughts and feelings rule
Psychiatry - there's science and there's this:
And I'm amazed by those who see this 'art'
As branch of medicine with power to heal.
cx. Their power to heal: a printed sign which read
'Keep taking the tablets' and was obeyed
Would better any live psychiatrist:
They know about locked wards, are blind to weal.
cxi. (And of the 'thoughts' of these psychiatrists
I mean judgement which varies, is at odds,
From one to other, or from one to one
At different times - opinion's variance.)
cxii. Psychiatry as ruled by facts or thoughts?
To find which better fits I think I will
Investigate some motivations, but,
Helped by hindsight and things that I have learned.
cxiii. There's an international guideline which states
My diagnosis can't be handed out
If symptoms of withdrawal play a part,
And this would seem as sensible to most:
cxiv. If someone shows delusions at the time
They are withdrawing from addiction's clasp
It seems as fair to blame the drug withdrawn
And not invent some new disease or ill.
cxv. In residential detox (alcohol)
It was thought fit to diagnose disease:
Against this guideline, I was labelled worse:
It stuck: not long ago I asked 'Why thus?'
cxvi. It was explained that my clinician, then,
Had 'feelings' which outweighed, had greater worth,
Than what the international guideline states:
Put plain - 'Whatever he should think is true!'
cxvii. Now I have read the guideline more than once
And nowhere does it mention 'feelings', no,
And were it to it wouldn't be a guide
But in effect state open season's here.
cxviii. You cannot have a guideline which then says
'Ignore if you are feeling otherwise':
'Go vaccinate against the mumps, unless,
You feel different' - it doesn't work like that.
cxix. And so, I think you see, psychiatrists
May deal with 'thoughts' and feelings over facts,
Whatever other the objections raised:
The discipline is like no science known.
cxx. This is a form of strict authority,
And just whatever they will think or feel
Replaces judge and jury - true but sad -
This is psychiatry - it drives me mad.

cxxi. Fact ten - this tragedy - that's what it is -
This needn't be a dire catastrophe:
Thus I have thought - though it's a job to prove,
And demonstrate the grounds to persevere.

cxxii. Fact ten not just reworking of fact four -
The emphasis does differentiate:
I guess this fact might seem embodiment
Of one to nine's essential distillates.

cxxiii. Fact ten then represents a stone inscribed
With that experience that heartens hearts,
A sign that guides the way to words of truth,
A simple mark that borders narrow path.

cxxiv. And so fact ten accepts the tragedy
As that - a reason for unhappiness:
It pains, to be institutionalised,
And most prescription drugs are kind but harsh.

cxxv. The most unpleasant tragedy of all
Is people's minds, Coleridge's verse explains:
Let Eagles bid the Tortoise sunward soar -
As vainly Strength speaks to a broken mind.

cxxvi. There is a point of disconnection found
That means the disengaged of mind are mad,
And though a pity is invoked, they flail
And try to grasp a senseless object's sense.

cxxvii. But here I speak of others on the ward
And only reading some of Shakespeare's plays
Can I begin to know the tragedy
Which must be felt when loved ones see their mad.

cxxviii. (But then converse, I name *hysterics*,
Which is the way that many see the mad
Projecting drama onto what's real life:
The sane like Eumenides in pursuit.)

cxxix. When ill, you have to hope that things improve,
And if they don't, you have to hope some more,
Blind optimism is the only cure,
And don't complain, you know it could be worse.

cxxx. And even though disease is cyclical
I stand up proud and say this to myself:
"Perhaps you tilt today, are not perfect,
Just let another year improve and heal."

cxxxi. Fact ten will say that out of tragedy
(If managed with the mind and thought in check)
Will come remission, with a portion health,
More self-reliance, greater good all round.

cxxxii. A tragedy is reason for sorrow:
Catastrophe a reason for despair:
The mind can separate the two of these
And not despair when fate begins to tease.

cxxxiii. I hope you see the truth (at least in part)
Of these ten facts (despite tendentiousness)
I treasure these and they have leant me strength:
It's now two years since I was sectioned last.

cxxxiv. Before I talk of that which I may call
Prolonged remission (though I speak to soon
For any certainty) please let me first
Digress and speak on an unusual case.

cxxxv. I think I have inherited a gene
That runs in my maternal family
And could well be the cause of this disease:
Some family succumb but function well.

cxxxvi. With this in mind I'm saying to myself
That alcohol is my Achilles' heel
And now I start to grasp the root of this
My chances multiply and but increase.

cxxxvii. My mother: diagnosed when young, and now
Retired professor, having known through life
A permanent remission, furthermore,
Her medication, long ago, was stopped.

cxxxviii. And if the cause is in this gene I have
(From her) I don't expect the usual course
For this disease (which can but give me hope)
My mother, I, avoid the alcohol.

cxxxix. This, not the way that my psychiatrist
Has time to know about and view my case:
These are but thoughts, and only abstinence
And weal can start to prove if they are true.

cxl. So now I aim and pray for what I call
Prolonged remission, that which I define
As state of health not needing hospital
And during which my team don't intervene.

cxli. Two weeks ago it was two years ago
That I was sectioned last - two years have passed -
I cycle on a two year interval
Could it be now I live on borrowed time?

cxlii. Although, this part of cycle seems different
I'm off the drink and there's subjective weal ...
If not on borrowed time, this could well be
Prolonged remission, just two weeks of it.

cxliii. Unlike the other times, I've worked for health,
And whether it's been gifted me or not
I'm proud to say that I've stood firm and tried
It's better to have striven for first place ...

cxliv. I gamble for a prize (without a loss)
And do what's good for me (the good's all gain)
And if (as hoped) this brings health back to me
It pays out more than any lottery.

EPILOGUE

i. This self that I described, as close can be
To what I am: model of my inscape,
That I have built and shaped to verse's scale
Whose truth I measure using what I know.

ii. My thoughts are scraps of rag, but can combine
(If handled with a skill) and make a quilt:
A raw material that few would want,
Refined to decoration and a use.

iii. And thus if I don't daily work my thought
It turns to negatives, would make me drink,
Whereas if I invest in thinking well
My thought encourages sobriety.

iv. This self is self, which I in part control,
(Though it controls, were I to lose my grip):
As thought dives (simple that it is) and delves
It thinks that God helps those who help themselves.

v. And when I spoke of my objective state
I spoke of where my self was stood or perched,
I talked of wealth and means and state and hope
(You see how I compare to other's lives).

vi. Were this agenda, it would spell despair
And when I weaken (which I do at times)
I find I'll find the best of grounds to lapse,
And yearn to soften blows of this through drink.

vii. But misfortune (and this is like, if not)
Appears at times subjective, relative:
There is a pain - so utter - it swallows
Substance up - things objective take back seat.

viii. My outlook primes the flow in feedback loop,
And I can regulate the present sign,
Prepare to fail if thoughts are negative
And see the change when changed to positive.

ix. And all these squandered opportunities
Are but my self's attempts at loss for self,
A list that's grown with time of dire own goals,
A pelican that lets its blood for play.

x. And every item in this catalogue
Could be a drink upon the bar that's drunk
In vain attempt to steady nerves and self
But with result of further sore decline.

xi. Although this list of woes turns list of wines
That once were on display and now are drunk,
At times, in my imagination's eye
There is an element of choice in thought.

xii. And when I look at what I have in life
It must be said it could and has been worse,
You could complain that you don't serve or carve
Or count yourself as lucky you don't starve.

xiii. Attempts at occupation represent
Self's aspirations to the norms of all,
How I would love to work and earn my keep
With strength that comes from used ability.

xiv. And when I worked I ended day with drink
And when I didn't that is how I'd start:
Preoccupation with my dreams of norms
But set me up to fail in other ways.

xv. I need a realistic view of work
Like the ersatz that is my authorship,
Whereby I write such things as best I can
And hope that some will read and maybe gain.

xvi. And thus I can command the stance I take
And this command can alter how I feel:
And better easy trade (the iambic)
Than try to master someone else's trick.

xvii. And then I spoke of ingrained attitudes,
And these belong to self, which I must change,
And though they should and would be aides to me
They hinder like the rust on rust-choked cogs.

xviii. Perhaps I'm not in touch with feeling's range
And this encourages a search for hope
Which starts the quest in bottom of a glass
(In case the object of desire is there).

xix. But now I think my feelings and myself
Have reached a stasis (chaos ruled before)
And from this point I have the chance (with work)
To gain the upper hand and tune myself.

xx. And thus I need not start the search for hope,
I have but just enough for my own needs:
It's vain to look for things externally
When what's required exists internally.

xxi. And what I claim for me and alcohol
(I claim, I hope, I offer up to gods)
Is that the drink might be the only cause
Of psychiatric ills that I have known.

xxii. When all is weighed of drink I blame myself,
I should have seen the problem years ago
And realised that drink is woe for me
With or without the psychiatric ills.

xxiii. For me, to drink a pint (or glass of wine)
Becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy
And forges link in adamantine chain,
The chain which binds me to a further drink.

xxiv. I have described, and know, how I stay dry,
But God above, don't ask me how I quit:
The strength of will that something granted me
Not mine but gifted from futurity.

xxv. This city I describe, as close can be
To what I know: model of this landscape,
That I have built and shaped to verse's scale
The truth of which is found if there's a match.
xxvi. At times I've crossed this young and stubborn wife
That is a city, and in doing so
I have opposed a force that brooks no slight,
And acts on any opposition made.
xxvii. To be the *unuxorious* husband
Is but to rail against the vows as spoke:
I choose to live in this metropolis
Defying it will only drive me mad.
xxviii. London - an institution for the sane
And being that it pays to be at peace:
The other's swim in London's many ways,
Which, past your ken and your control, may phase.

xxix. And when I spoke of my asocial state
I mentioned how I fail to interact,
I feel impairments others notice soon,
Which feelings grow to inabilities.
xxx. And though I didn't state it then as such
My lack of social grace might well be seen
As others' condescension, snobbery,
England's class hatred of the *aclassé*.
xxxi. The stigma's such between the varied groups
That one outside might bear the brunt of it:
No class! No group! Then automatically
You're treated worse than what is known and cursed.
xxxii. The many's harsh superiority
Will have me madly tearing out my hair:
Despite the fact it's said you choose your friends,
A shrunken choice divorces means and ends.

xxxiii. This lonely friendlessness that I have won
Is but my self's poor prize for lack of grace,
The tallied goals against that grow with time,
The pelican that lets its blood despite ...

xxxiv. This lack of friends could be that fatal straw
Upon the camel's back (the camel is
My sanity): the mind requires others,
To do without will need a certain flair.

xxxv. I have some friends, not lots, but one or two:
This indicates that when I wrote of this
Perhaps I was unfair, and to myself,
Not totally, but maybe just a bit.

xxxvi. With friends, my past remains, in which I have,
Put politely, not advertised myself:
I yearn for social steps, and novelty
Of me not as my own worst enemy.

xxxvii. Attempts at finding love but represent
Aspiring to the norms of others' joy,
And I would love a love which is returned,
With rounded strength and sensuality.

xxxviii. Love's play has never been a friend to me,
And thus I've either been one mad in love
(Regardless of reciprocation) or
Sublunary - I have known each extreme.

xxxix. And both extremes are stressors (in their way);
Through gifting heart with love your life is ruled,
You don't command - you are commanded to:
Through lack of love you need command yourself.

xl. And thus with affectations and my lack
(The lack my choice, or veto of those wooed?)
I talk of love but when it comes to me
My chosen option stays celibacy.

xli. And then I spoke of some in family,
Such others weave with self, and will not change,
And though they should and would be aides to me
Some hinder like the rust on rust-choked cogs.

xlii. Perhaps you wouldn't be a bit surprised
The number in my family who tend
To aggravate my psychiatric state
In place of calming it (which few will do).

xliii. And it will really come as no surprise
Concerning those who are a cause of stress,
I influence their acts, behaviour, words
As much I do the rain the wind and sun.

xliv. For these self-immolation could suffice
But as I wish to live as best I can
I start to feel that I can't tolerate
The parts of family that find I grate.

xlv. And what I claim for my psychiatry
(I claim, I hope, I offer up to gods)
Is that the demon drink has been the cause:
If I abstain, the illness may remit.

xlvi. When lunacy is weighed I raise my fist
And blame the gods (the others in the skies)
And say 'Why me? Why am I singled out?'
'And Why do I invoke *hysterics* ?'

xlvii. And so to say: madness is my weakness,
I try for strength in all I can control
And hope my weaknesses protected thus,
This, an experiment, which still could fail.

xlviii. I haven't tried to tell you how it is
To be so mad that you need locking up:
Just thank the gods you have sufficient sense -
We have no common frame of reference.

COLOPHON

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